THE BLIND IN INDIA AND ABROAD

BY

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DEDICATED

As An Humble Token

of

RESPECT and GRATITUDE

to

Dr. SYAMA PRASAD MOOKERJEE,
M.A., B.L., D.Litt., LL.D.,
Barrister-at-Law, M.L.A.,

Ex-Vice-Chancellor, Calcutta University,
Ex-Minister, Government of Bengal,

without whose

Kindness, Sympathy and Co-operation

my desire to help

My FELLOW-SUFFERERS in INDIA

would have remained unfulfilled.

SIX OF THE GREATEST FRIENDS OF THE BLIND

(Arranged in Six Dots of Braille)













1. VALENTIN HAUY
2. LOUIS BRAILLE
3. FRANK H. HALL
4. SIR ARTHUR PEARSON
5. RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE
6. MISS HELEN KELLER

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Mrs. MAIE CASEY
Wife of the Rt. Hon'ble Mr. R. G. Casey, the present Governor of Bengal, who has written the Inspiring Foreword to this book

FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that I write a Foreword to this book by Professor S. C. Roy.

I have been fortunate in having the friendship of several men who have lost their sight; and through them I have learned to understand something of the point of view of the blinded man towards his life and his future.

As Helen Keller, that wonderful American woman who became blind and deaf and dumb when a baby, has said " The heaviest burden on the blind is not blindness, but idleness."

From the moment the sightless child or adult realises that though his world has not the physical light of ours, it is still a world full of potential usefulness and happiness, he begins to live and to develop.

His life is still full of richness and of depth and his world still one in which the gifted individual is able to reach his full development.

The blinded are not necessarily different from the sighted because of the accident of their blindness. They are normal individuals with their own particular characteristics, who have overcome their first great obstacle through character and through patience. Having achieved this, they are on the highway to overcome greater obstacles than will the average man.

But this has all to be recognised by the world of sighted men for theirs is the initial responsibility for the education of the blind. It is they who must help the blind children and adult in their first steps; not

by shielding them but by teaching them how to be independent.

I believe that as a balanced and widespread education is one of the keystones in the life of any country, so must the education of the blind of any country form part of it. For this, Governments and the enthusiasm of voluntary effort must combine.

The same opportunities must be given to the blind as to other citizens and these they will amply repay, for they are endowed through their handicap with the capacity to go deep into the font of human nature.

Many of them are exceptional individuals, and with their added degree of sensibility and penetration they should be able to contribute much to the life of their countries. Some of them have already done so; in many lands there are famous names of blind poets and writers, of lawyers and administrators.

Professor Roy's most interesting and thoughtful collection of lectures is, I understand, the second book on the blind to be published in India.

It will, I am sure, be welcomed by the public which has yet so much to learn on the important subject of the prevention of blindness and the education of the blind.

I wish this book every success.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
CALCUTTA:
July 3rd, 1944.

MAIE CASEY.

PREFACE

The present volume is a collection of my speeches, articles, radio-talks, letters, etc., bearing on Blindness and the Blind, arranged chronologically from 1936 up to date. For the limitation of space, arising out of acute shortage of paper, all my writings and speeches about the blind could not be included, and only brief summaries of some of my speeches have been reproduced. Most of the materials, presented in this book, have been published in newspapers and journals, and only those references of publication, which could be easily obtained, are mentioned in foot-notes.

Since this volume is intended to deal exclusively with the topics about the blind, my speeches and writings about matters not relating to the blind, have been excluded from this book. It is hoped that these speeches and writings will form the subject-matter of another book some time in the future.

For the benefit of those who read Bengali and Hindi, but do not know English, a few articles and speeches in Bengali and Hindi have been incorporated in this volume. Most of these materials have, however, been covered by the English portion of this book.

The activities of the All-India Lighthouse for the Blind, a new institution in Calcutta, founded in 1941 at the instance of the author of the present volume, have been referred to rather too often in this book. One of the contemplated functions of this institution was to train and rehabilitate the Indian war-blinded

persons as this type of service did not exist in this country. This accounts for the fact that the work for the war-blinded has been mentioned in several articles and speeches recorded in this book. However, a branch of St. Dunstan's was established by Major Sir Clutha Mackenzie at Dehra Dun in July, 1943, and ever since, the All-India Lighthouse for the Blind has turned its attention to the work for the civilian blind only.

The facts and figures about blind work have been retained in conformity with the dates under which they were set forth in my articles and speeches. I have considered it wiser to maintain chronological accuracy than to interpolate the information which was not available at the time of writing those articles and speeches. A few variations of the same point of information have, thus, occurred in this book in accordance with the date under which a particular article or speech was written and these divergences should be read and comprehended in the light of the fact I have just stated.

I regret very much that the speeches could not be printed in their entirety owing to the reason stated above. The brief summaries have, I am afraid, given a rather hasty and unbalanced appearance to the speeches and have, at places, detracted from the importance they deserve. Besides, since many of the speeches were prepared for meetings convened on very short notices, much time and thought could not be devoted to their preparation.

Another apparent shortcoming of this book is that certain ideas. thoughts, quotations and even phrases have been repeated at places. This is due to the fact that the articles were written for different

papers at different times, and the speeches were delivered at different meetings on different occasions, and I did not have any idea until very recently of publishing these materials in book form.

Despite all these deficiencies and shortcomings, my labours will be amply rewarded if this little volume helps the cause of the blind in India and provides any information, inspiration or insight to the sightless individuals and to those engaged in the welfare work for the blind.

CALCUTTA,
29th June, 1944. } S. C. ROY.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am indebted to several persons for their assistance and co-operation in the completion of this little volume. I take this opportunity to record my grateful appreciation of their valuable services, although it is not, obviously, possible to mention here each of these persons individually.

I am under a deep debt of gratitude to Mrs. R. G. Casey, the wife of the present Governor of Bengal, for her most interesting and inspiring Foreword to this book as well as for her kind permission to reproduce her photograph in this book.

To Mr. P. S. Mathur, Deputy-Director of Public Information and Publicity, Bengal, I am indebted for lending me the said photograph of Mrs. Casey.

I acknowledge my thankfulness to Messrs. F. W. Heilgers & Company, Calcutta, and the Titaghur Paper Mills, Ltd., for the ready supply of all the paper which was required for this book. This co-operation is very noteworthy in these days of acute paper scarcity.

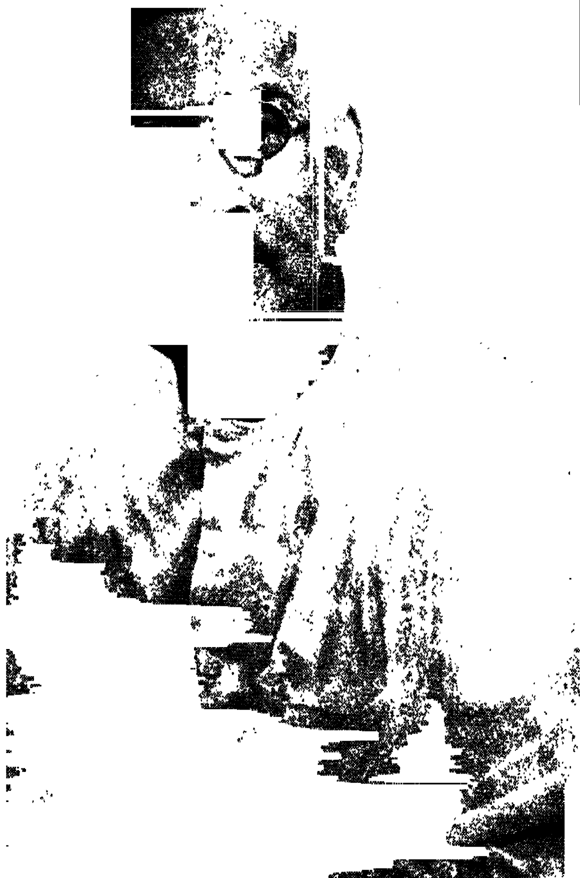
Mr. M. S. Sengar, a prominent journalist in Calcutta, has gone through my manuscripts and has made many useful suggestions, for which I am immensely thankful to him.

Miss Phul Ranee Guha, one of my most brilliant students of Blind Education at the Calcutta University, has helped me by rewriting some of the Bengali articles from Braille manuscripts, and for this hard and peculiar task, I owe her many thanks.

The services of Mr. Nani Gopal Majumder, who has read through my manuscripts and has made a number of important suggestions, including those about the Frontispiece and the get-up of the book, are thankfully acknowledged by me.

Last, but not the least, I am conscious of my debt to Mr. D. Gangulee and Mr. N. Sen, the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent respectively of the Calcutta University Press, for their great interest in this book and for their efforts to expedite its publication.

S. C. R.



Mr. NIBARANCHANDRA ROY
Father of the Author of this Book, who made excellent provision for the education of the Author

AUTHOR'S NOTE

There have been three great influences on my life, in the absence of any of which this book would have remained unwritten. It is, therefore, right and proper for me to acknowledge these influences in my first book. I mention them in the order of the time of their occurrence.

I received the first influence from my parents—particularly from my mother. It was mainly at her instance that I was sent to school at the age of 10 against the protests of many who could not believe that I, being blind, could be educated, or did not think that education was necessary for me. It is just a quarter of a century ago that I was admitted to school as a blind boy, and it was certainly remarkable of my parents to have realised the need for my education at that time and to have sent me to a residential institution situated far away from their place of residence. I shudder to think what would have happened to me if my parents, following the example of several others under similar circumstances, kept me at home without giving me any opportunity for education.

The second influence came from Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, to whom the present volume has been reverentially dedicated. Without his help and encouragement, I could not have gone abroad in order to study the conditions of the blind in different parts of the world. Without his help, also, I could not have served the blind in this country in the way I have the privilege of doing.

My wife, Mrs. Evelyn Roy, provided the third influence. Without her co-operation, sacrifice and ungrudging help, I could not have carried on my work for the blind in the midst of so many difficult and trying circumstances. Her advice and assistance have been invaluable to me in organising the All-India Lighthouse for the Blind.

S. C. R.



MRS. SARATSUNDARI ROY
Mother of the Author of this Book, who was mainly responsible for the education of the Author in his boyhood

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

THE BLIND IN INDIA AND ABROAD

WORK FOR THE BLIND IN INDIA *

The public attitude towards the blind in India is nothing if not highly anomalous. Generally speaking, the seeing people in India appear to know this much very well that the lot of the blind is indescribably miserable and that they are decidedly lost to society from the point of view of economics, politics, and every other art or science that has ever been conceived. But they hardly believe that the blind people may be of immense service both to themselves and to others if they are given proper opportunities for education and self-realisation. The blind are sincerely lauded for their proverbial memory and keenness of intellectual penetration; but equally sincerely they are looked down upon for their proverbial incompetence to do anything worthy of respectable mention. Sometimes, they are regarded as being endowed with some *supra*-human faculties; and, on other occasions, they are sneered at as being definitely sub-human. But they are very seldom given a place on an equal footing with the seeing persons.

These contradictory views about the mental equipment and abilities of the blind individuals may be attributed mainly to two reasons:

* Published in the *Advance*, Calcutta, 6th May, 1936.

Firstly, the educational progress of the blind in India is still on a very low level; and,

Secondly, the general public are in blissful ignorance even of the little bit which has been done in this direction.

It is no exaggeration to say that the sightless persons suffer more from the ignorance and apathy of their seeing fellowmen than from their own blindness. They do not worry very much about their loss of vision, since they know that it is a fact which is very definite—beyond all dispute and misrepresentation. But they have a great deal of worry about the fact that their powers and achievements are usually subjected to scepticism and misinterpretation. From this, one should not run away with the idea that the blind persons are very susceptible to criticisms of their work and ability. They, on the contrary, welcome such criticisms, however unpleasant and outspoken these may be. But what they find difficult to bear are the settled suspicions and the confirmed bias which often inspire these criticisms.

In this short paper, an attempt will be made to state very briefly and, in a general way, the work that has been done up to the present day in order to ameliorate the conditions of the blind in India, and to make a few suggestions regarding the steps which may be taken in the future for the better and more effective work. The more technical problems, *viz.*, special psychological reactions of the blind, the questions of pre-school blind children, the education of partially-sighted children, prevention of blindness, etc., are reserved for discussion in the subsequent papers.

It is very disheartening to have to note at the very outset that the number of the blind persons in India is larger than anywhere in the world. According to the Census Report of 1931, the number of the blind in the whole of India is a little over 600,000 in a total population of about 350 millions, and, in Bengal alone, the number is over 37,000. Considering the fact that the people do not usually like to be recorded as blind, it may safely be presumed that the actual number is much greater than what is given here. Besides, the definition of a blind child, as adopted and enforced in Great Britain for educational purposes, is not applied to India, and a large number of persons who should really be regarded as blind, has not been computed as such.

It may be remarked here that the number of the blind in India exceeds that in the whole of Europe, including Russia, by more than 100,000 Again, although the proportion of the blind in India to its population is lower than that in Egypt, yet the number of the Indian blind is a great deal higher than that of the Egyptian, the latter figure being 155,000, according to the Census Returns of 1927. Even in China, where the total population is much higher than that of India, the number of the blind persons is less by about 100,000 than the corresponding Indian figure.

It may not be out of place to record here a few remarks about the general causes of blindness in India. Small-pox and Ophthalmia Neonatorum are the main diseases from which the loss of sight results. The extreme poverty and ignorance of the people are also immensely responsible for such a large proportion of blindness in India. The people are

too poor to consult an ophthalmologist and receive a proper and timely treatment for their ocular troubles. They also cannot afford to take the sufficient amount of nutritious food which is, according to the recent medical opinion, so essential to the preservation and continuance of normal vision. Moreover, the masses are afraid of being treated for eye-diseases and they have a particular terror for operations. Sight has been lost in many cases because no timely action was taken or because of treatment by quacks, of whom there is a great number, or for neglect in infancy.

Another reason of the educational backwardness of the blind in India is that most of them come from the poorer strata of society, and their parents often object to their children going to school as the latter are perhaps the only bread-winners of the whole family, bringing in a good income daily by begging. It will be very surprising for many to hear that begging in which the blind are engaged is organised in India on a commercial basis. Blind as well as crippled children and adults are employed by agents, and the proceeds are divided in accordance with the terms of the contract. So it may be realised why parents object to sending their blind children to school to be educated. The rich class, on the other hand, consider it simply unnecessary and troublesome for their blind children to receive education. For, as they have not to earn a living for themselves, why should they be burdened with work when they are already stricken by the hand of Providence?

The Indian parents are generally credited with having more affection for their children than the parents in any other country. The truth of this proposition is particularly irrefutable in the case of

Indian parents of blind children. The parents would rather keep their sightless children at home in the state of idleness and ignorance than send them to some blind institution in order to learn some art or industry; and this is explained as nothing but a natural exhibition of the overwhelming parental affection for their helpless sons and daughters. In course of time, these sons and daughters begin to feel that they have nothing particular to learn and the world owes them a decent living throughout their life-time. Herein lies another cause of the educational backwardness of the blind of India.

Lastly, the relation between the State and its blind subjects gives rise to a rather difficult question, and it must be admitted that this question is not yet settled, so far as India is concerned. All the leading States of Europe and America and the Government of Japan have taken upon themselves a special responsibility for their blind subjects; and it will be shown later that steps have been taken by those governments for the amelioration of the conditions of the blind in their respective territories. The Government of India and the Provincial Governments have, no doubt, subsidised some institutions and helped some individual blind students with special stipends and scholarships, but they have not yet taken the problems of blindness so seriously as the Governments in Europe and America have done.

In this connection, the point should be stressed that the education of the blind is not a charity, nor should it be so at any time. If the spread of literacy among the people at large is considered to be genuinely necessary, then the Government should take immediate steps to spread literacy among the blind

inasmuch as the blind persons are as good citizens as others.

In spite of these difficulties and hindrances, some tangible progress in the work for the blind in India has been made. In 1887, the first school for the blind was founded at Amritsar by the Christian missionaries. Gradually, other schools were established in different cities and towns of the country, and to-day there are about 16 institutions for the blind in India, including those situated in the Native States.

In all these institutions arrangements have been made for imparting literary, musical and industrial education both to boys and girls. But, unfortunately, most of these institutions bear a greater resemblance to asylums and orphanages than to regular schools of the day.

It should be observed in this connection that the Calcutta University has always given a very warm support to the prosecution of higher studies by blind students and has been extending all facilities for their examinations since the first boy was sent up to sit for the Matriculation Examination. All thanks are due to the Calcutta University for this kind help and encouragement.

Notwithstanding this progress, as just indicated, the education and amenities of the blind in India are much behind those of the progressive countries of Europe and America. Some interesting figures may be compared here in order to illustrate the truth of this statement. The total number of the registered blind persons in England and Wales was 64,842 in 1934; and there were altogether 35 blind schools, 46 training departments and 59 workshops for these per-

sons. The fact that India has only 15 blind schools for over 600,000 blind persons may be recalled and compared in this context. Japan has more than 90 institutions for about 76,000 blind people; Spain has 32 blind schools for 38,000 blind persons; while, Switzerland possesses 5 blind schools for 2,260 blind individuals. The figures are taken at random and may easily be multiplied. But India's place may be judged from those which have just been quoted.

It will be both interesting and instructive to know at this stage the rôle which some States have played towards the promotion of the cause of the blind. The Russian Government has always taken a very keen interest in its blind citizens and it included in its last five-year plan an item regarding the problems of the blind. In Australia, blind persons from the age of 16 are granted a Government income of one Pound a week in addition to their wages and bonus, provided their earnings with the pensions do not exceed four Pounds and five Shillings a week. In Japan, the School Laws for the Blind, which were issued by the Imperial Edict in 1923, compelled every prefecture to establish one or more public schools for the blind within 8 years of that date. Some States of America bear the expenses for guides and readers engaged for the blind. The Italian Government have started special workshops for the blind and have made arrangements for protecting the blind workers from the seeing competitors. The British Parliament has always been a guardian angel to the blind persons in Great Britain and has passed a number of laws for their comfort and happiness. Some of these legislations may be enumerated here: the Customs and

Inland Revenue Act (1878) enabling a blind man, using a dog as guide, to do so without a licence; the Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act (1893) making the education of the blind children compulsory between the ages of 7 and 16; the Post Office Act (1908) enacting special postage rates for embossed books and papers; and Blind Voters Act (1933) enabling a blind voter, who wishes to do so, to take a companion with him to the polling booth to mark his ballot paper.

Besides these legislations, the blind persons in Europe and America enjoy many other advantages which India cannot adequately conceive of. To mention only a few of them here: in many States of Europe and America, a blind man accompanied by a guide, is permitted to travel on most of the railways at the cost of one fare for two persons, and a similar concession is made by some of the bus and tramway companies. In England, wireless licences are granted free to blind persons. In short, the Governments and the public of the Western countries have taken the questions of the blind in all seriousness and they are always anxious to ascertain as to how they can raise the social status of the blind and make them as much happy as possible in spite of their physical handicap.

It is high time for the Indian Government and the Indian people to take up in right earnest the problems confronting the blind in India. The so-called sins of the past lives of the blind persons should be forgotten and honest efforts ought to be made to raise their social standing. They should have better education and more concrete sympathy; they should be judged by the same standards applicable to the seeing, and they should be given their rightful places

in society so that they may become happy, useful and self-respecting persons after removing the age-long prejudices about their powers and abilities. As in the West, blindness should be regarded not as a tragedy, but only as an inconvenience. Instead of pitying the blind, as has always been the case, particularly in India, they should be helped to help themselves. Every opportunity should be given to both the seeing and the blind men and women to serve the cause of the blind. To quote Sir Ian Fraser, a blind member of the British Parliament:

> "In every country every encouragement should be given to young blind people who have the gift of leadership, to come forward and help to guide the blind community towards greater opportunities for material and spiritual well-being."

The following suggestions may be made for the better and more efficient work for the blind in India:

1. The problem of the blind should be divided into three main parts, *viz.*, the prevention of blindness, the education and training of the blind, and the after-care of the blind. Of these, the third item, *viz.*, the after-care of the blind, is the most perplexing question and should receive a very careful and sympathetic handling from the Government and the public alike. It is often noticed with regret that the blind persons, after obtaining a finished training in some branch of work, fail to secure a suitable employment. In order to cope with this problem adequately, the National Institute for the Blind in England has appointed a person, known as the "Placement Officer," who is charged with the duty of finding out employments for the blind candidates.

Many States of the West have, as mentioned before, undertaken this task and they have succeeded in solving this vexed question to a considerable extent. In the United Kingdom, blind persons are not barred from entering into Government service. This may be illustrated by the fact that Mr. Henry Fawcett, blind from early youth, served as the Postmaster-General of Great Britain for several years. For an effective grappling with this matter, a special department should be started by the Government of every province. Miss Helen Keller has rightly observed that " The heaviest burden on the blind is not blindness, but idleness," and the Government ought to see that its blind subjects do not remain idle and make themselves useless to society.

2. There should be a thorough registration of blind persons in India, as it has been done in many countries. This will render the handling of the problems of the blind easy and effective.

3. New institutions for the blind should be started at the important cities and towns of India. It has been shown above by facts and figures that the existing number of blind schools is hopelessly inadequate for the spread of education among such a huge number of blind persons in India.

4. A sufficient number of blind persons should be trained in order to take up the teaching work of the blind. In this sphere of work, the blind are generally better fitted and more efficient than the seeing; and it has been truly remarked by Dr. Carl Strehl, the Director of a German institution for the blind:

> " As a rule, the blind child will have more faith in a blind teacher; for in the blind teacher

one has a reason to expect a deeper understanding of the psychological problems of the blind child. His example will usually help to overcome the inferiority complex that is so common with blind children."

SEND-OFF TO AMERICA *

(Summary of a speech delivered at a public meeting, held at the Albert Hall, Calcutta, on the 7th September, 1936, under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. P. Mookerjee, the then Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University.)

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I am extremely thankful to you all for this send-off meeting which so many of you have taken the trouble to attend. I am also very grateful to the speakers preceding me, who have made some nice and kind statements about me, which, I am afraid, I do not deserve.

The only thing that I would like to say on this occasion is that, by awarding the Rashbehary Ghose Travelling Fellowship to a blind person for the first time, the Calcutta University has recognised the claim of the blind in India. I must confess at this place that some members of the Ghose Board were

* Published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, and the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta (both on the 8th September, 1936).

very brutally frank with me and told me that they were unable to support my candidature for the Fellowship on account of my blindness. One of them went as far as to say that, since I am blind, I should not bother about going abroad, but should stay at home, enjoying whatever peace of mind was in store for me in this country, as he did not think that the Fellowship would be put to a good use if it was awarded to me.

However, the Vice-Chancellor of this University, who is kindly presiding over this meeting, and a few other members of the Ghose Board, thought differently on the matter, and the result is that I have succeeded in securing the Fellowship and you have to-day assembled here to send me off to America for the purpose of obtaining training in the up-to-date methods employed in the education and care of the blind.

I am deeply grateful to the Vice-Chancellor and the members concerned for having the courage and foresight in sanctioning this highly honoured Fellowship to me. I only hope that, on my return from America, I may be able to render some service to my fellow-sufferers in this country and, thus, justify the confidence placed in me by the University of Calcutta.

I am very pleased to see so many from amongst the public present at this meeting. This is a sure indication of a growing public interest in matters affecting the blind. I hope that I shall be able to add to this public interest by my own share of work for the blind on my return from abroad.

MY PLAN OF WORK IN INDIA

It is quite plain that the plan of my work is entirely dependent on the work I shall have the opportunity to do. To put it differently, if I have to act as a mere class-room teacher, then the plan of work will be vastly divergent from that which I must formulate if the administration of a school is entrusted to my care. Again, if I am supposed to enter this field as a worker outside a school, and if I have to restrict my activities within the limits of a province only, then my plans will certainly differ widely from those which I shall have to devise if my work be to deal with the problems of the blind of India as a whole, touching only the national aspects of these problems.

Frankly speaking, I am not yet sure what will be my allotment of work when I return to India. In this paper, however, I shall sketch the plan of that kind of work which I would like very much to do, and which, most probably, I shall be privileged to do. I prefer to be a worker, dealing with the all-India aspects of the problems of the blind of India, and this paper will record an attempt to set out my plan for this kind of work.

Obviously enough, I can only sketch the outline of my plan in this paper and mention certain broad points only; the details and the minor points, although very often of vital importance in themselves, will be excluded from my discussion here, as they will be taken care of as I shall proceed with my work.

* A paper written in 1937 for Columbia University.

1. In the first place, I shall try to secure correct statistics of the blind people of India as a whole. If the present statistics, as recorded in the Census Report of 1931, be not deemed to be quite satisfactory, I shall try to arrange for a new census, either through Government or through semi-public and purely private ways. What these ways will be is, I think, a matter of mere detail, and I do not intend to set them down here.

2. Secondly, I shall then arrange for the registration of all the blind people, either with the Government or with an accredited public body which has to be created for this and other purposes, to be stated later. The advantages of this registration, as distinguished from the census, will be seen in connection with the distribution of relief and various other items of welfare activity.

3. Thirdly, I shall divide all the blind persons, first, into men and women, and then into three groups according to their ages, namely, (*i*) those who are fit for nursery school; (*ii*) those who are fit for school or college education; and (*iii*) the blind adults, those who have become sightless fairly late in life and those who are blind from early age, but who have become fairly advanced in age.

The importance of sex division can hardly be emphasised in India where co-education or co-work has not yet been accepted as a universally working principle.

Now, I shall have to tour from one end of India to the other in order to establish nursery schools for the children. The age of these blind children, their psychological and their environmental problems have to be studied; and vigorous efforts will have to be

made to bring these children to nursery schools from their parents who know nothing about blindness and its peculiar problems.

So far as I am aware, there is not a single school of this description in India.

Then, those who are of school-going age should be made to go to school.

I feel ashamed to admit that in India there are only fifteen blind schools, including those situated in the Native States, for a blind population of about 600,000, the figure being taken from the Census Report of 1931. Of these fifteen schools, again, some are called "schools" only by courtesy, as they are no better than orphanages and asylums.

It will be interesting to compare in this connection the number of blind shools in Great Britain and the United States of America. In England and Wales alone, there are thirty-five schools for about sixty-four thousand registered blind persons. In the United States of America, there are forty-nine schools for about the same number of blind people. In addition to these residential blind schools, there are several classes for the blind in the regular public schools. But, so far as I know, there is no such class anywhere in India.

Most of the blind schools should be of the residential type, and all schools should be provided with modern equipment for reading and writing by the blind.

In every school, there should be a class for the sight-saving children. I regret to say that no blind school in India, even no sighted school, has this kind of arrangement. Countless cases of blindness have resulted from making the sight-saving boys and girls

learn either as the children with sight or as blind children.

There should be a Braille printing press attached to every school. It is a shame that the blind boys and girls in India have to write their text-books with their own hands in these days of scientific progress.

In short, several new schools for the blind should be established all over India with modern outfits.

For the third group, namely, the blind adults, several homes for their residence, and factories for them to work in, should be set up throughout India. So far as I know, there is not a single home or factory of this kind that India can be proud of. Generally, the blind adults of India just stay at home, if they have any, and spend their days lamenting on their blindness and cursing God and society.

4. Fourthly, I shall try to induce the Government and the Central and Provincial legislatures to enact some laws intended for the education, relief, amenities and employment of the blind. The most important of these will be the law for compulsory education. This will not be any additional burden on the community, since the blind in India are generally so poverty-stricken that the community will have to pay for their education anyway. As in America and Great Britain, other laws for the relief and pension of the blind should also be introduced.

5. Fifthly, a new department, both at the Centre and in different Provincial Governments, should be inaugurated for the care and welfare of the blind. This will be something like the State Commission system of the United States.

6. Sixthly, a national body like the American Association of the Instructors or the Workers for the

Blind should be founded. This body will be responsible for the registration, educational policies, and other important matters regarding the blind. This body should be non-political and private in character.

7. Seventhly, a central public library containing Braille books in different Indian languages should be established. There should also be libraries of this kind in every province. The National Library for the Blind in London, and the Library of Congress at Washington are splendid examples of what can be done in this direction. Unfortunately, we have no library for the blind in the whole length and breadth of India.

8. Eighthly, I should try to instal several printing presses at different central places in India for publishing Braille books and journals in various languages of India. So far as I know, there is only one printing press of this kind in India. But it does only the printing work for the school to which it is attached. There is not a single Braille journal in India, whereas there are scores of them in America and Great Britain.

9. Ninthly, I shall try to found a national clearing-house like the American Foundation or the National Institute for the Blind in London. It should keep all the data and information relative to the blind. We have not any central organisation like this in India. None of our fifteen blind schools in India knows what the other is doing and what is happening in the field of blind work. This does not foster the growth of work, but it generates isolation, conceit and narrowness. A clearing-house like what

I want to establish, will serve the work for the blind in a splendid way.

10. Tenthly, some courses should be started at big and important universities for the purpose of training the intending teachers and workers for the blind. The education of the blind is a very technical and growing subject, and one who wants to benefit the blind by his or her service, should be thoroughly trained for this purpose. Every Tom, Dick or Harry cannot deal with the blind and their problems effectively unless he receives some training and guidance in this field from experienced workers and teachers.

11. Eleventhly, I shall start a vigorous agitation for the prevention of blindness in India. I understand that the Red Cross Society is doing some work in this connection. But this work should be more active and widespread. We must look forward to some day when there will be no blindness and no problem to solve in this field.

12. Lastly, a correct appreciation of the abilities of the blind people and the real significance of blindness should be brought home to the sighted public. I am afraid, very little has been done in this direction. But, in my opinion, this is indeed a vital question, and I shall have to do a lot in this connection. I am thoroughly convinced that the blind suffer more from the wrong attitude of the public towards them than from their own blindness. It should be made clear to the public that the educated blind individuals have not dropped from the heavens. Almost every blind person in India can be educated and become a respectable citizen, and can be a contributing member of society if he

or she is given proper opportunities of education and self-realisation. On the other hand, all blind people are not subnormal. The range of intelligence among the blind people is as varied as among the sighted persons. The blind are just like ordinary people, minus the sense of vision. They do not live in a separate world by themselves as distinguished from that of those with sight. The blind do not form a class by themselves. There are as many, if not more, variations among the blind as among the sighted. The variations among the blind are chiefly due to the age of blinding, causes of blindness and the degree of vision left.

This correct understanding about the blind and blindness should be brought about through press and platform, and by means of the frequent exhibitions of the work done by the blind in educational, musical, vocational, and other branches of learning.

In the foregoing pages, I have made an attempt to sketch what I want to do on my return to India. I have learnt what to do and how to do it, thanks to America and Great Britain; the only thing I need is opportunity. I want to bring about a complete revolution in the conditions and status of the blind in India, and I believe I can do it if I am encouraged by public opinion and public funds. The financial assistance should, of course, come both from public and private sources. In my judgment, one of the most satisfactory tests of a particular civilisation is its attitude towards the physically, mentally, or socially handicapped people, and I strongly believe that India, as a civilised nation, will not be found wanting in this respect.

IN A LIGHTER VEIN

(Summary of a talk delivered at the Indian Students Union, London, on the 18th January, 1938.)

You have expressed your wish to hear something about my life as well as about the work which I shall undertake for the blind in India. I shall try to satisfy your desire; but my talk must be very brief, not only because the time at my disposal is extremely limited, but also because I may start praising myself unconsciously if the speech about myself be allowed to be very long.

Like every other person, I was born in a particular place, on a particular date and under particular circumstances. But when I was a boy of only eighty years of age, I had an attack of Ophthalmia, followed by Cholera. This combination of two diseases led to the loss of vision in both my eyes. Various types of medical (and also non-medical) treatments were tried, but without any effect at all.

Time and tide does not wait for any one and it did not wait for me either. Three years rolled by in treatment, sadness and uncertainty. But the question of my education had to be taken up without any further delay or hesitation. Before the onset of my blindness, I used to attend a seeing school and, even during my blindness, I continued going to the same school for some time and carried on my class-work orally. But, obviously enough, this oral education could not be prosecuted for long. Meanwhile, the news of the existence of a blind school in Calcutta reached us and my mother who





THE AUTHOR

was more anxious about my education than anybody else at home, decided to send me to this school.

The period of eight years at this blind school is not a very pleasant remembrance. The unusually strict discipline, the whimsical and cruel treatment of the Principal, and the constant bickerings between the Principal and the other members of the staff as well as between him and the pupils,—all these made the place more like a prison than an educational institution. Besides, the absence of properly qualified teachers and the frequent rehearsals of cheap musical programmes and physical feats, continued almost throughout the whole year at the cost of serious study and work, for the purpose of pleasing and astonishing visitors, donors and subscribers, constituted a great handicap in our school career.

However, with the help of private tutors engaged for me by my father, I passed the Matriculation Examination from this school as a private candidate. I entered college and real life at the same time—the life at the school being nothing very different from an imprisoned and tortured existence.

My life at college—first at the St. Paul's College, Calcutta, and, later, at the Presidency College, Calcutta,—is full of delightful memories. I completed my University career in India with the M.A. Degree in Mental and Moral Philosophy in 1935 and the B.L. (Bachelor of Law) Degree in 1936 from the University Law College, Calcutta.

Since I was planning to take up the legal profession, I was articled at the Calcutta High Court for two years under Prof. R. M. Majumdar, a distinguished lawyer of the said High Court.

In the mean time, I noticed a change coming over me regarding my future vocation. I used to read about the improved status of blind persons in Europe and America. This brought me the realisation of a painful contrast about the position of the blind in India. I started cherishing a desire of studying the conditions of the blind in the Western countries and of contributing my little bit towards the amelioration of the lot of the blind in my country. The financial difficulty stood in the way of realising this end. The opportunity at last came and it was mainly through the help and sympathy of Dr. S. P. Mookerjee, the Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, that I was awarded a Rash-behary Ghose Travelling Fellowship for the purpose of prosecuting my studies and investigations in Europe and America.

While in America, I visited several institutions and organisations for the blind and received the M.A. Degree in Education from Teachers College, Columbia University. As you know, this college has acquired an international reputation for the training of teachers, and I had the unique privilege of studying under such eminent educationists as Dr. Kilpatrick, Dr. Frampton and Dr. Pintner.

At present, I am engaged in studying the methods employed in the education of the visually handicapped in Great Britain, and I shall soon leave for the Continent for studying the work conducted there.

Coming to my plan of work in India, I must confess that I do not know what exactly will be my assignment on my return. The work for the blind there is extremely backward and the scope of

service in this sphere of activity hopelessly limited. However, I shall make my best endeavours to be of some use in this particular field. I am even willing to devote my whole time and energy to this work if such an opportunity comes in my way.

My request to you, the Indian students present at this gathering, is that you should try your utmost to help the cause of the blind in India, no matter what service or profession you take up on your return. You can do this very well through the exercise of your personal influence and your enlightened experience about the blind in Great Britain. On your return to India, you may some day find me calling on you at your house or office, reminding you of this evening's talk and asking you to do your duty towards your sightless brothers and sisters.

INTERVIEW WITH MISS HELEN KELLER

(Summary of two interviews with Miss Keller in New York on the 23rd March, 1938 and the 2nd April, 1938.)

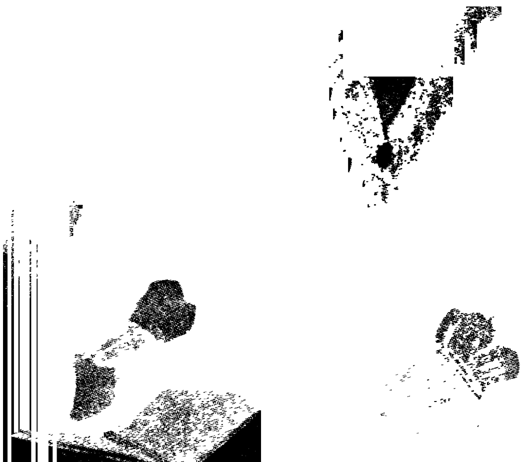
It was with a good deal of eagerness and expectancy that I was looking forward to my meeting with Miss Helen Keller, about whom I heard and read so much from my very boyhood.

It is not possible for me to record here a life-sketch of this wonderful lady who is often described as the "Eighth Wonder." Those who are interested in knowing about her life, should read her autobiography—*The Story Of My Life.*

I may only state here that Miss Keller became completely blind, deaf and mute at the age of her 19th month as a result of a severe illness. In spite of the absence of these three important sense-organs, she has completed her University education with a Ph.D. Degree and has written about a dozen of interesting and valuable books. She is now over 60 years of age, and has learnt to speak a little, although her speech will appear to be very indistinct to many. I do not know how an average Indian who regards blindness alone as an insurmountable barrier to success in life and social usefulness, will look upon a person who is triply-handicapped like Miss Keller.

To return to my interviews with her. The first time I met her was when she was starting out on a tour of lectures in different parts of America on behalf of the blind. She was sitting in a Pullman car with her private secretary, Miss Polly Thomson. Miss Thomson introduced Miss Chernack (who later became Mrs. Roy) and me to Miss Keller. The warmth of Miss Keller's hand-shake is something to remember. She told me that she must see me again on return from her lecture-tour as she wanted to hear a lot about India. As the train was to leave very soon, my first interview with her came to an end in another few minutes.

Within a few days, I received a letter from her, inviting Miss Chernack and myself to tea at her residence in Long Island. The day we met again was a memorable occasion for me. We were in Miss Keller's house for more than two hours and discussed about travels, blind education, politics and quite a few other subjects. Miss Thomson was interpreting on Miss Keller's hand through the manual



Poet RABINDRANATH TAGORE Visiting Miss HELEN KELLER in America

alphabet system what we were saying, while we were following Miss Keller's talk, at times made clear by Miss Thomson. Apart from this manual system, Miss Keller has another method of understanding a person's talk. She places her fingers on the throat, the lower lip and the tip of the nose of the speaker and follows what he says. She adopted this method when poet Tagore visited her and recited some of his poems in English. She told me that she followed him very well in this way and repeated his poems after him quite successfully.

One thing which struck us particularly is the demonstration of her ability to recognise a piece of music from the radio just by touching it. She told us correctly whether the music was a vocal or an instrumental piece and she even showed us the rhythm of the music played. It should be repeated here that she is completely deaf. She can perform this miracle by following the vibrations of the radio. She feels vibrations from almost everything,—from the chair she sits on, from the floor she walks on, and from everything she touches.

She told us about her visit to Japan in great details, where she was taken by a number of blind organisations in order to advance the cause of the blind in that country. Later, when I myself went to Japan, I was told by many Japanese blind persons how her visit gave a new life to blind work in that country.

She evinced a great desire to visit India and asked many questions about life in this country. "I often dream about India," she said, "Won't you take me to your country some day?" I said that I

surely would and that it would be more in the interest of the blind in India than in hers.

It is indeed very sad that the promise still remains unfulfilled.

DESULTORY IMPRESSIONS *

Since my pupil days, one of my major interests has been to improve the lot of the blind in India. I have always noticed with deep regret that the blind persons in our country are generally treated no better, at times much worse, than domestic animals. Pity, contempt, neglect, lip-sympathy, unhealthy curiosity and wonder, and sentiments of similar description have been all that the sighted community have, as a rule, piled upon the already existing miseries of blindness. Could not something be done about it? I wondered.

Years rolled by—several of them. At last the opportunity presented itself in the form of a Fellowship awarded to me by the University of Calcutta for the purpose of investigating the conditions of the blind in different parts of the world. This was the first instance in the history of the Calcutta University to award one of its Fellowships to a blind person.

For financial reasons, I had to start out alone and unaided in September of 1936. Misgivings and apprehensions I had many, some of them quite serious. But I am now in a position to say that I never

*Published in the *Statesman*, Calcutta, 8th June, 1938.

regretted the step which seemed to be so beset with imaginable and unimaginable difficulties. I was told abroad that *I had the good fortune of being the first blind person in the world to undertake a tour round the globe unaccompanied.*

But I must state in fairness to myself that the credit of all this belongs to the men and women of the West, and not to me. What impressed me most about the Western people, especially about those of Great Britain and the United States of America, are their unostentatious helpfulness and their wonderful sense of self-respect. These are the two lessons which every Indian going to these countries should learn and practise in his life.

When some of these people offered me help, it seemed as though it is they who were going to be obliged and not me. I can mention innumerable instances of the polite ways in which the Western people used to propose help to me. But this is not the proper place for that; I intend to narrate all my experiences as soon as I can in the form of a book.

Just to say a few things about the blind people abroad. They are blind,—that is all, and nothing else. Through the efforts of both Government and the public in all the Western countries and Japan, especially in Great Britain and America, almost all the blind people have received education of some sort and have become contributing members of society. They have become distinguished lawyers, professors and teachers, journalists, Government officials, musicians, trained manual workers, and so on. Both in America and Great Britain, the blind people are eligible for Government service. There are several blind men and women who have be-

come very successful editors, reporters, and correspondents of many well-known papers for the seeing. I met an American lady who is a reporter of the *Buffalo Express*. She has a guide dog with the help of which she travels in all parts of the United States, meets the prominent people and collects materials for her journalistic work.

The Governments of the Western countries have taken upon themselves the task of employing educated and trained blind persons and of providing for the unemployables. Both the public and the Government have co-operated in placing in the hands of the sightless persons all the best literature and scores of periodicals printed in Braille. In Japan, there is even a daily paper published in Braille. The *Osaka Mainichi* whose circulation runs to millions, opened about seventeen years ago a Braille department from where a Braille edition of this sighted paper comes out as a weekly. The circulation of the Braille paper is more than five thousand. I am inclined to believe that Japan has gone ahead of all other countries in the world, so far as the press facilities of the blind are concerned.

By way of concluding, I must confess that I have failed to conceal my disappointment whenever I have thought about and seen the conditions of the blind in our country. Nowhere in the world have I noticed such a big gap between theory and practice. Our Sanskrit scriptures have proclaimed the equality of all human beings. But I have not seen anywhere such abominable inequalities between man and man.

It seems to me that our country is losing economically by not educating and employing its blind

folk. Our country is feeding them all right, but is not taking advantage of their services and contributions. From this standpoint, the countries of the West and Japan have proved to be very clever.

In my opinion, one of the tests of a particular civilization is its attitude towards the Handicapped either physically, mentally or socially. I believe that India, as an ancient civilization, will not fail in this test.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF MY TRIP ROUND THE WORLD *

(Summary of a speech delivered at the Bhowanipur Y.M.C.A., Calcutta, on the 19th July, 1938, under the chairmanship of Mr. A. K. Shah, Principal, Calcutta Blind School.)

I am an admirer of the activities that the Y.M.C.A.'s are carrying on in different parts of the world. I myself have lived in one Y.M.C.A. and am familiar with the Y.M.C.A.'s of London, New York and Paris. So I should be excused if I attach some sentimental value to this invitation by the Bhowanipur Y.M.C.A.

I left Calcutta on the 8th September, 1936. Obviously, I wanted to take some one with me as my guide and assistant. But for financial reasons, I had to start out alone. I, however, received a good deal of help from some Indian students who were going to London, but my destination was New York.

* Published in the *Statesman*, Calcutta, and the *Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta, 20th July, 1938.

From Bombay, I went to London through Italy, Switzerland and France. I stayed in London only for three days as my boat for New York was to sail from Liverpool very soon.

I landed in New York exactly one month after the date on which I left Calcutta. The Atlantic Ocean and the American Immigration Office gave me quite a lot of trouble. I did not mind the former so much, but the latter seemed to be too much for me. I was the first blind Indian to enter the United States and so the American Immigration Authorities wanted to be very sure about the details of my financial and eye conditions. I resented their treatment very much. England was much more friendly than America in this respect. I saw some other passengers to be actually humiliated by the American Immigration Authorities. I wish these Immigration people were a little more polite and humane.

However, along with a few other passengers, I was taken to the Ellis Island. It is a beautiful spot and many people go there for sightseeing. But the island was our prison for the time being. I was detained there for about four or five hours, had to satisfy another set of officers about my credentials and *bona-fide* intentions, and then I was allowed to enter the city of New York. But what a difference I noticed as soon as I was with the American people away from the Immigration atmosphere! They were so friendly, helpful and social.

I think that America is ahead of all countries in the world in the welfare work for the blind and in social service in general. At times, I just wonder how such a great country can afford to have so many

criminals and so many varieties of heinous crimes within it.

Here I stayed for one year and obtained the Master's degree in Education from Columbia University.

I also had the honour of being invited by Miss Helen Keller, the famous deaf-blind-mute American lady, at her residence. In spite of her complete deafness, she gave me a demonstration of her wonderful ability to tell the rhythm of a piece of music by just touching the radio.

In addition to New York, I visited the schools and organisations for the blind in Washington, D.C., Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Hartfort, New Jersey and the State of Washington.

The New York City is a land of skyscrapers. I had a god deal of thrill when I went up the 102nd floor of the Empire State Building—the highest building in the world.

I experienced specially two difficulties during my first few days in New York, but I mastered both of them later: one was its sub-zero weather, and the other was the peculiar American slang and accentuation.

In the September of 1937, I left New York for England. I came on board the *Queen Mary* and so my trans-Atlantic voyage was quite comfortable. This boat is like an improvised city and has all the conveniences as well as inconveniences of the city life.

In London, I missed the comforts and cheerful weather of New York. But the English people appealed to me to be more sober, disciplined and unostentatious than an average American. The English

Immigration Authorities are certainly much more lovable than the American.

I had the privilege of meeting Sir Francis Younghusband * in London. He showed a deep sympathy with my mission to help the blind in India and I wrote a paper on this theme at his instance, which was supposed to be read at a meeting there, to be attended by those preparing for the Indian Civil Service. I toured in different parts of England, Wales and Scotland to visit the work for the blind in those places. I spent about five months in Great Britain.

The language difficulty started to be felt as soon as I left for the Continent. From this time on I visited schools in the company of interpreters.

Paris appealed to me to be a very artistic city. I enjoyed climbing up the Eiffel Tower.

But I was a little disgusted with the dishonesty of French chauffeurs. They will take you round and round for nothing and demand excessive rates. Paris was specially interesting for me for the fact that the first school for the blind in the world was established here in 1784 and that Louis Braille, the originator of the method of reading and writing for the blind, which is known after his name and which is now in use all over the world, invented his famous system here in 1829.

To reach Berlin from Paris requires only a few hours' train journey. I had to hold my tongue all the way since there was not a single English-speaking man or woman in the train.

* Since deceased.

I found beautiful sunshine in Berlin. The German people appeared to be very friendly. But I did not like the prejudice of the Germans against the Jews. Every German, I talked to about the Jews, seemed to be unjustifiably one-sided on this question.

From Germany I came to Belgium and from here I took a boat to New York on my way to Japan. I crossed the whole American Continent from New York to Seattle in train—a distance of about 3,200 miles.

On my way to Japan, I visited a few schools for the blind in Canada.

I liked Japan very much as the Government and the people of Japan have advanced the cause of the blind to a great extent in a comparatively short time. I also admired the honesty, courtesy and discipline almost universally practised by the Japanese people.

But I did not like their food. The Japanese people are quite primitive so far as cooking is concerned.

I also did not like the sight of civilian Japanese people going to war, the people going to China being far less enthusiastic than those who came to see them off with band, music and national slogans. From Japan, I returned to Calcutta after spending about two years abroad.

Many of my difficulties on the way were removed by the special arrangements made by the American Express Company through whom I travelled round the world.

The impression which gratified me most during my stay abroad is that the blind men and women in every country I visited are regarded

as normal people. They are in and of the society. They have abundant facilities for education and employment. Millions of pounds are being spent every year to bring light and happiness in their lives and to utilise their services for society. Should we only sit and watch?

INTERVIEW WITH POET TAGORE *

(Summarised report of the interview, held on the 26th July, 1938.)

During my college days in India, I was a mighty enthusiast for Bengali literature and I read most of the writings of the well-known Bengali authors of those days. It was, therefore, quite natural for me to read in books and periodicals some stories dealing with blind characters or containing remarks about blindness. I was very shocked and pained to notice that most of these stories could not depict blind life correctly from the psychological standpoint and that the writers were more interested in their traditional ideas and feelings about the blind than in the psychological truths about blindness. In other words, while dealing with blind characters, the authors were subjective and not objective, and, unfortunately, the

* Published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, and *Jugantar*, Calcutta (all on the 27th July, 1938). An editorial comment on this interview appeared in the *Advance*, Calcutta, 28th July, 1938.

gap between the subjectivity and objectivity in this particular case was too wide to be ignored; and this led not only to the delineation of false psychology, but it also, in my opinion, lowered the status of the blind in public estimation.

Something had to be done in the matter. I was looking for an opportunity to see poet Tagore and place my point of view before him. It was on the 26th July, 1938, that I could fulfil my desire.

I met the poet at his Calcutta residence and had a discussion with him for half an hour. I told him about my grievance regarding the unfair treatment which the blind characters had been receiving at the hands of Bengali authors,—the most important complaint being that I had not seen any normal and successful blind individual depicted by them. Frustration in the life of a blind person was the keynote for all these writers.

I even pointed out to him about his own shortcomings in this regard, as exemplified in his story, *Drishtidan* (Gift of Sight). At one place in this story, the blind heroine says:

"How can I possibly forget you, since mind, and not the outside world, exists for a blind person?" (I have quoted here only the idea, and not the exact words).

I enquired of the poet what he exactly meant by saying that a blind person did not have an outside world and how could this statement be linked up with the psychology of forgetting. He very graciously confessed that he did not have a personal contact with any successful blind person and that he had written the story from his own subjective idea about the psychology of blindness.

I told him that I had read some English stories in which the blind characters were not led to desperation and suicide, but they were presented as normal persons living side by side with their seeing compatriots and making their contributions towards the well-being of their social and family units. I also drew his attention to the fact that this type of writing would also help the cause of the blind considerably inasmuch as the seeing readers would come to know that all blind persons are not beggars, dependents or queer persons.

He very kindly agreed to my request to write a fiction or a drama in which the life of a successful blind hero or heroine would be depicted. He told me that he might have to discuss certain points with me when he would be engaged in writing this book. My services were, of course, always at his disposal.

I confided in the poet that I was thinking of publishing my diary which I had been writing in Braille since my departure from India in 1936. He encouraged me to have the book published as he thought that the book would help the seeing people to be conversant with the psychological and other problems of the blind.

On account of my leaving for Europe again soon after my meeting the poet and his more or less constant ill-health leading to his sad demise in 1941, he could not write his promised book which would, undoubtedly, have been a very valuable contribution towards the cause of the blind in India.

A BRIEF REPORT OF MY EXPERIENCES IN THE WELFARE WORK FOR THE BLIND ABROAD *

During my study-trips to Europe, America, Canada and Japan, I was pleased to note that the stamp of each country's peculiar genius was definitely recognisable in its welfare work for the blind. It may be mentioned, as a rather broad statement, that Great Britain and the United States of America have influenced directly or indirectly the work for the blind throughout the world; but the evidences of adaptations by each country to its peculiar needs and environmental demands are unmistakably noticeable.

In this synoptic report, my attempt will be to outline in a very general way the common factors in the work of the visually handicapped which are more or less emphasized by the countries I visited.

1. *Definition of Blindness*

It is just natural to formulate the legal and social concept of blindness and its all-sided implications before inaugurating on a scientific basis any scheme of activities for those afflicted with this handicap. A mere misty approximation of the notion of blindness has a positively baneful effect on any welfare work, however well-meaning it may be.

All the advanced countries realised this at a very early stage of their blind work. In those countries, blindness has not only been strictly defined, but it has also been measured in terms of different degrees

* Published in the *Calcutta Review*, August, 1938.

of the affliction. This has laid the scientific-minded workers for the blind in those countries to substitute the term " visual handicap " for the commonly used and more commonly misunderstood word " blindness."

The degree of vision which constitutes blindness in Great Britain, for instance, is 6/60; in America, 20/200, and so on. Periodic eye-tests are held in every school for the visually handicapped as well as for the sighted, and transference of enrolment takes place, if necessary, in accordance with the results of these eye-tests.

2. *Education of pre-School Blind Children*

The education and training of the blind begin in the very early years of their life. In some cases, even when only eighteen months old, they are taken away from their homes and are placed in what is called " Sunshine Homes for Blind Children," or the " Nursery Schools for the Blind."

Usually, the parents or the guardians do not know how to take care of their blind children or wards. They alternate between coddling and neglect. I was told of an instance in England where one of the twins was blind. The parents used to confine their whole attention to their seeing child to the entire neglect of the blind one. Not only that, the parents used to tie up the sightless child to the corner of a cot, so that it could not hurt itself, while they had all their fun at home and excursions abroad in the company of the sighted child.

On the other hand, the better and preferential treatment meted out by parents to their blind child is a matter of common observation.

It needs no saying that both these attitudes prevent the normal growth of the blind children at home. The Sunshine Homes are free from these drawbacks as the blind children are brought up under a common roof and are given the same treatment, facilities and environment.

Besides these problems of care and discipline, there are several other problems, mainly psychological and psychiatric in nature, which can never be solved with any measure of satisfaction unless the blind children are entrusted from their very infancy to the care and guidance of experts in the psychology and education of the visually handicapped. For instance, the problems of autostimulation, "blindism," personality maladjustments, etc., which start operating in the life of blind persons from their very childhood, can never be effectively tackled except by people trained in the psychology of the blind.

In these Sunshine Homes, the blind children are kept and trained till they are five or six years old, after which they are sent to the schools for the blind. Trained teachers and nurses are appointed in these Homes, where the sightless children are taught free and fearless movements of the body, lessons in the adjustment to the seeing world, elementary music, Braille, and simple handicrafts.

3. *Education of School Children*

In all the countries except Japan, the primary school education of blind children is free and compulsory as that of the sighted. In each country, there are schools providing every scope and facility for the education and training of blind children. Japan has ninety schools for its seventy-six thousand blind

population, although, as stated above, it has no provision for free and compulsory education of its blind children.

Before or immediately after the children are admitted to a school, their aptitudes and vocational possibilities are tested by intelligence and personality tests which have been adapted to the conditions of blind children from those devised for children with sight. The emphasis on the kind of education which each of these children should receive, depends to a great extent on the results of these tests. Those who are found mentally retarded, are given special attention, and their education is carried on by special teachers through what is called "opportunity classes."

There is a systematic vocational guidance for each pupil, so that he or she is not left in a state of perplexity regarding the ways of making a living after the school years are over.

In order to encourage the reading habit among the blind children, scores of periodicals and thousands of books have been printed in Braille and placed within easy access. The Library for the Blind in New York City, the Library of Congress at Washington, the National Braille Library in London, etc., have, each of them, three or four hundred thousand books in Braille in different subjects, and they lend those books free to all blind people just for the mere asking.

The majority of the teachers in schools for the blind have been especially trained for their work. The education of the visually handicapped is quite a technical and a growing subject, and no one can be expected to be an efficient teacher of the blind with-

out knowing the psychological and educational problems involved in this specialised field. In Great Britain, the Board of Education stops all financial grants to a blind school if it employs a teacher who has not obtained a diploma from the College of Teachers for the Blind. In America, the blind schools discourage the appointment of teachers who have not received special training in the Education of the Visually Handicapped from some recognised institutions.

The appointment of blind persons as teachers or workers for the blind is specially encouraged in those countries. They are regarded not only as efficient workers for the blind, but also as inspiring examples to them. In America, it has become an unwritten law that in a school or organisation for the blind, at least one-third of the staff should be recruited from among the blind. Some schools have bilnd persons constituting as much as sixty per cent. of their staffs.

Besides, the heads of many schools and organisations for the blind are blind persons. The heads of most of the State Commissions for the Blind in America are themselves blind. The Executive Director of the American Foundation is also a blind person.

In all the progressive schools for the blind, there are arrangements for solving the special problems involved in the education of the partially-sighted children. There are such provisions even in the schools for sighted children. In England and Germany, there are separate schools for children with partial vision. The partially-sighted children constitute, for educational purposes, a class by themselves. They cannot be educated either through sighted or

blind methods. This truth has not been realised in our country, with the result that hundreds of children with partial sight have lost and are losing their vision entirely.

In addition to the visually handicapped children, there is another group of children who are more unfortunate and whose educational problems are more difficult to solve. These are the Blind-deaf-mute children, suffering from the triple handicap of blindness, deafness and dumbness. America is ahead of all countries in the world in the education of these unfortunates, and Laura Bridgeman, Helen Keller, and a few others have shown what these children can do if educational facilities are provided for them. During my second visit in America, I discussed with Miss Helen Keller the problems of these children and also studied the methods of teaching them. Usually, the blind schools have opened departments for these children in their own premises.

In addition to these residential schools for the blind, classes for blind boys and girls have been opened in ordinary seeing schools. This is indeed a very interesting experiment. It helps the growth of mutual understanding between the blind and the seeing children from the very early stage of their lives. I am inclined to believe that there is a great scope and need for such classes in our country under its present economic conditions.

4. *Education of Blind Young Men and Women of Post-School Stage*

It has been realised in those countries that the blind boys and girls will be quite helpless if they are

not taken care of after they finish their school education.

Those who are fit for higher studies are encouraged to enter colleges. There are several scholarships for assisting the needy students towards the college expenses.

Those who intend to take up music as the means of their livelihood are encouraged to enter the schools for higher music. There are several scholarships for these students as well.

Those who have specialised in some industry, are placed in what is called "sheltered workshops." These workshops are subsidised by Government and the public, and the blind people work here as apprentices for three or four years, after which they become regular workers. During the period of apprenticeship, all their expenses are paid for by those workshops.

5. *Activities of the Agencies and Organisations for the Blind*

What is to be done with these educated and trained blind men and women? The agencies and organisations for the blind have been brought into existence to solve this and various other problems. There is no unhealthy rivalry among these organisations, since each of them is engaged in solving problems distinct from those handled by others. In London alone, there are about ten or twelve organisations working side by side to help the blind persons in different ways.

The principal activities of these organisations may be summarised as follows:—

(*a*) They try to secure employments for the educated blind men and women. Through the efforts of these organisations, most of the blind people have been able to be contributing members of society. They have succeeded in inducing the German Government to pass a law to the effect that every firm or factory must employ a certain percentage of its staff from among the physically handicapped people. In Japan, a blind beggar has become an anachronism. In Great Britain, the blind persons are eligible, in accordance with a law passed by the Parliament early this year, for old age pension when they are forty years old, while the seeing persons must be sixty-five in order to be entitled to the benefits of this pension.

For those people, who are definitely unemployable, the Government has made special financial provisions through the efforts of these organisations. There are several homes where the unemployable blind men and women are maintained at public cost.

Those whose earnings are not enough to meet their necessary expenses, receive augmentations in their wages either from those organisations or from the Government.

(*b*) The education of the adult blind, *i.e.*, who lose their vision rather late in life and who cannot obviously be taken care of by regular schools, is undertaken by these organisations. Teachers are sent to the homes of the adult blind and they are taught Braille and some useful occupation. The home teaching service is most efficient and widespread in Great Britain and the British Government is spend-

ing huge sums of money each year towards the maintenance of this service.

(*c*) These organisations also undertake the publication of books and journals in Braille, Moon and in other types, as well as the making of talking-books. There are about eighty English periodicals in Braille published in America and Great Britain. In Japan, there is even a daily newspaper in Braille.

(*d*) Agitations for the improvement of the lot of the blind are carried on unceasingly by these organisations. As a result, several legislations have been passed in all countries, which have made the lives of the sightless community happy and respectable.

6. *Prevention of Blindness*

This is a very important problem, and more and more emphasis is being laid on it in every country. It has been held that about seventy per cent. of blindness in every country is preventible, and every year the number of the blind persons in the Western countries is decreasing through the strict application of preventive methods. There may be a day when there will exist no blindness, and hence no problem of blindness to solve. But until that day comes, all possible arrangements should be made to lessen the miseries of the already existing and would-be blind persons.

7. *Conclusion*

In the foregoing pages, I have recounted in a very general and briefest possible way my experiences regarding what other countries are doing in order to ameliorate the lot of the sightless community. It will be seen from the above dissertation

that the visually handicapped persons are taken care of by those countries from the time they are born until they die. As a matter of fact, the Western countries have become definitely conscious of their sacred responsibility towards the handicapped members. The doctrine of *laissez-faire* in this matter is considered to be very dangerous and has been abandoned by all civilized countries. It has been realised that a country cannot progress very well if the handicapped persons belonging to different groups are allowed to remain as permanent drags on it.

I am positive that our society in India is making a great economic waste by not educating and not employing its blind individuals. Our society has to bear the burden of these people anyhow; then why should it not take something out of them? Besides, in certain spheres of activity, the blind individuals can render better and more efficient service than even the seeing. The Western societies have realised this truth and have been prompt to take advantage of it.

There is another way of looking at the same thing. Real sympathy is shown to the blind persons not by feeding them at public expense and keeping them idle at home, but by giving them education and burdening them with work and responsibility. This truth has not been realised in India, and all efforts in helping the blind have, thus, been misguided and abortive. Dr. Childs, the Professor of Psychology at Teachers' College, Columbia University, has rightly said:

"For an individual to be a member of a society and yet have no responsible part in its activities is a

form of social ostracism that breeds disastrous spiritual consequences."

In my opinion, the blind people have a more urgent need for education than even the seeing. There are mainly two reasons in support of this view:

First, the blind persons cannot be employed in any work without receiving any systematic training and education extending over several years, while there are various spheres of activities for the seeing individuals in which they may be employed without such protracted training and education. In these activities, the mere possession of sight, combined with some amount of commonsense, is all that is needed to qualify a person for employment.

Secondly, the seeing people have the freedom of movement and several other factors to keep themselves busy with. But the sightless individuals have to carry on a dreary and monotonous existence and have a feeling of helplessness and aloneness in the world if they are not taught something which will keep them busy and make them feel that time, after all, moves.

I should like to append four papers to this report.*

The first paper lists about hundred schools and organisations for the Visually Handicapped which I visited abroad.

In addition to these places, I met several successful blind people of each country I visited in order to gain practical experience and inspiration.

* The appended papers are not reproduced here.

The second paper records the courses which I took at Teachers' College, Columbia University, New York, towards my Master's Degree in Education, specialising in the Education of the Visually Handicapped.

The third paper* describes a scheme of activities which should be undertaken at once in India for its visually handicapped persons. I submitted this paper to Columbia University as a course requirement, and it was highly appreciated.

The last paper † is a copy of an article which I wrcte and got published before I left India about two yeers ago. This contains many facts and figures regarding the blind communities in India and abroad.

অন্ধগণ ও বেতার ‡

(১৯৩৮ সালের ৮ই আগষ্ট তারিখে কলিকাতা বেতার-কেন্দ্র হইতে প্রদত্ত বক্তৃতা)

আপনাদের কাছে আজকের এ সন্ধ্যায় আমি যে বিষয়ে ব'লব, সে বিষয়ের নাম হওয়া উচিত "অন্ধগণ ও বেতার,"—"অন্ধদের জন্য বেতার" নয়। তার কারণটা পরে বিশদভাবে ব'লব। সেটা সংক্ষেপে এই যে, বেতার অন্ধদের কি কি উপকার সাধন ক'রেছে শুধু সেটাই আমার বক্তৃতার বিষয় নয়, অন্ধ

* The third appended paper refers to the article—"My Plan of Work in India," which appears elsewhere in this book.

† The last appended paper refers to the article—"Work for the Blind in India," which appears elsewhere in this book.

‡ কলিকাতা বেতার-কেন্দ্রের সৌজন্যে প্রকাশিত।

ব্যক্তিরা বেতারের সাহায্যে সমাজের কি কি উপকার ক'রেছে ও ক'রছে সে সম্বন্ধেও আমি ব'লব।

এ কথা সকলেই স্বীকার ক'রবেন যে, বেতারের আবিষ্কারে মানব জাতির অশেষবিধ কল্যাণ সাধিত হ'য়েছে। কিন্তু কি কি কল্যাণ সাধিত হ'য়েছে, এই প্রশ্ন যদি কোনও দৃষ্টিশক্তিসম্পন্ন লোককে করা যায় তা'হলে বেতারের দ্বারা দৃষ্টিহীনদের যে সব উপকার হ'য়েছে তার কোনটারই উল্লেখ সে হয়ত ক'রতে পারবে না। এ সম্বন্ধে তার হয়ত কোনও ধারণাই নেই।

কিন্তু এ কথা আপনারা সম্পূর্ণ সত্য ব'লে জানবেন যে, বেতারের আবিষ্কার ইউরোপ ও আমেরিকার অন্ধদের জীবনে একটা সম্পূর্ণ অভাবনীয় পরিবর্ত্তন এনে দিয়েছে। সেখানকার দৃষ্টিহীনদের কাছে বেতারের মত এমন হিতকারী আর কিছুই নেই—কেবলমাত্র ব্রেল, অর্থাৎ অন্ধদের লিখবার ও প'ড়বার পদ্ধতি ছাড়া।

ভারতবর্ষের অন্ধদের নিকট এখন পর্য্যন্ত বেতারের একমাত্র প্রয়োজনীয়তা শুধু কিছুক্ষণের জন্য গানবাজনা শোনা। কিন্তু এর দ্বারা তাদের আরও যে কত রকম উপকার হ'তে পারে সে সম্বন্ধে চক্ষুষ্মানদের কথা দূরে থাক, তাদের নিজেদেরও কিছুমাত্র ধারণা নেই।

তাদের পক্ষে বেতারের সেই সুবিধাগুলো চারভাগে ভাগ করা যেতে পারে :—প্রথমতঃ, অন্ধ ব্যক্তিরা বেতারের সাহায্যে যে জ্ঞান ও আনন্দ লাভ করে; দ্বিতীয়তঃ, বেতারের সাহায্যে তাদের উন্নতিমূলক কার্য্যাবলীর যে সহায়তা হয়; তৃতীয়তঃ, বেতারের সাহায্যে তারা সমাজের যে সব হিতসাধন ক'রতে পারে; এবং চতুর্থতঃ, বেতার-সংক্রান্ত যে সব কাজ ক'রে তারা অর্থোপার্জন ক'রতে পারে।

প্রথমতঃ, দৃশ্যজগৎ অন্ধদের আয়ত্তের বহির্ভূত ব'লেই শব্দজগতের মূল্য এবং প্রয়োজনীয়তা তাদের নিকট এত বেশী। সেই জন্যই জীবনের এই অংশটার উপর তাদের এতটা নির্ভর ক'রতে হয়। তাদের সুখ ও দুঃখের অনেকটাই শব্দজগতের সঙ্গে জড়িত।

টেলিভিসন, অর্থাৎ দূরদর্শন-যন্ত্রের সঙ্গে সংযুক্ত না হওয়া পর্য্যন্ত বেতারের সুবিধা এবং অসুবিধা অন্ধ ও চক্ষুষ্মান উভয়ের নিকটেই সমান। চক্ষুষ্মান লোকেরা শুধু দৃষ্টিশক্তি থাকার জন্যই নানা বিষয়ে অনেক সুবিধা ভোগ ক'রে থাকে। কিন্তু আমার মনে হয় যে, বেতারের মত খুব কম জিনিষই আছে যা চক্ষুষ্মান এবং চক্ষুহীন উভয়েই সমানভাবে উপভোগ ক'রতে পারে। এই

সমকক্ষতার কারণ এই যে, বেতার শব্দজগতেরই একটা অংশ এবং এই শব্দ-জগৎ উপলব্ধি ক'রবার ক্ষমতা চক্ষুষ্মানদের তুলনায় অন্ধদের কিছুই কম নয়।

পূর্ব্বে যে সব আনন্দ উপভোগ ক'রতে হ'লে এক স্থান থেকে অন্য স্থানে যেতে হ'ত, বেতারের সাহায্যে এখন সে সব শোনবার ব্যবস্থা প্রায় প্রত্যেক বাড়ীতেই ব'সবার, শোবার এবং খাবার ঘরে অথবা ইচ্ছামত যে কোনও স্থানেই করা যেতে পারে। এতে ক'রে অন্ধদের বিশেষ এই সুবিধা হ'য়েছে যে, যাতায়াতের জন্য তাদের কারও সাহায্য নেবার প্রয়োজন হয় না এবং এই বিষয়ে সাহায্য সহজে পাওয়াও যায় না। গান, বাজনা, বক্তৃতা প্রভৃতি বেতারের অনুষ্ঠানগুলি শুনে তারা আজকাল প্রতিদিনই কতকটা সময় প্রচুর আনন্দ লাভ ক'রে থাকে। পূর্ব্বে এটা অন্ধদের পক্ষে সহজলভ্য ছিল না। ইংলণ্ড ও আমেরিকায় বেতার-সংক্রান্ত পত্রিকাগুলি ব্রেলে প্রকাশিত হয় যাতে ক'রে অন্ধ ব্যক্তিরা বেতার অনুষ্ঠানের সূচিগুলি পূর্ব্বেই জানতে পারে। এরকম ক'রেই বেতার তাদের নিঃসঙ্গ সময় কাটাবার পক্ষে প্রিয়সঙ্গীর মত হ'য়ে উঠেছে।

শুধু অন্ধ ব্যক্তিরাই নয়, যারা একাধারে অন্ধ ও বধির তারা পর্য্যন্ত বেতার অনুষ্ঠান থেকে অনেকটা আনন্দ লাভ ক'রে থাকে। কথাটা হয়ত আপনাদের কাছে খুবই আশ্চর্য্য ব'লে মনে হবে। কিন্তু এ বিষয়ে আমার নিজের ব্যক্তিগত অভিজ্ঞতা আছে। যখন আমি নিউ ইয়র্কে ছিলুম তখন এক দিন আমেরিকার জগদ্বিখ্যাত অন্ধ ও বধির মহিলা, হেলেন কেলারের বাড়ীতে তাঁর সঙ্গে আমার সাক্ষাতের সৌভাগ্য হ'য়েছিল। আমার সামনে বেতার যন্ত্র স্পর্শ করেই তিনি একটা গানের গতি ও ছন্দ ঠিকভাবে নির্দ্দেশ ক'রে দিলেন। তাঁর কাছে শুনলাম যে, তিনি বেতার যন্ত্রের কম্পন অনুভব ক'রেই অনুষ্ঠানগুলো বুঝতে পারেন এবং এই উপায়েই তিনি পিয়ানো, বেহালা, উচ্চ সঙ্গীত, সাধারণ গান প্রভৃতি সমস্তই ঠিকভাবে নির্দ্দেশ ক'রতে পারেন।

আমোদপ্রমোদ ছাড়াও অন্ধ ব্যক্তিরা বেতার অনুষ্ঠানের সাহায্যে অনেক প্রয়োজনীয় জ্ঞান লাভ ক'রে থাকে যা আর কোনও উপায়ে লাভ করা তাদের পক্ষে অত্যন্ত কষ্টকর। দৃষ্টান্তস্বরূপ বলা যেতে পারে যে, অন্ধ ব্যক্তিরা সব সময় দৈনিক সংবাদপত্র প'ড়ে দেবার জন্য আত্মীয়স্বজন বা বন্ধুবান্ধবদের সাহায্য পায় না। বেতার অনুষ্ঠান থেকে সংবাদগুলো শুনতে না পেলে তাদের অনেককেই বহির্জগৎ-সম্বন্ধে সম্পূর্ণ অজ্ঞ থাকতে হ'ত।

ইউরোপ এবং আমেরিকার দেশগুলো অন্ধদের জীবনে বেতারের এই মূল্য ও প্রয়োজনীয়তা বিশেষ ক'রে উপলব্ধি ক'রতে পেরেছে। বৃটিশ পার্লা-

মেন্টের একটা আইনে অন্ধদের বিনা ব্যয়ে বেতারের লাইসেন্স নেবার সুবিধে দেওয়া হ'য়েছে। তা ছাড়া, ইংলণ্ডের অন্ধদের বিনা মূল্যে পনের হাজার বেতার যন্ত্র দান ক'রবার জন্য পার্লামেন্ট থেকে প্রভূত অর্থ ধার্য্য করা হ'য়েছে। আমেরিকাতে বেতারের লাইসেন্সের জন্য অন্ধ বা চক্ষুষ্মান কাউকেই কোনও কর দিতে হয় না। তা ছাড়া, সেখানে এমন অনেক প্রতিষ্ঠান আছে যেখান থেকে অভাবগ্রস্ত অন্ধদিগকে বিনা মূল্যে বেতার যন্ত্র দান করা হয়। এইরকম বিনা মূল্যে দান করা অনেকগুলো বেতার যন্ত্র কোনও এক সময় নেওয়া হয়নি ব'লে সেগুলো অবিলম্বে নিয়ে যাবার জন্য অন্ধদের অনুরোধ ক'রে একখানা চিঠি আমি আমেরিকার এক সংবাদপত্রে প'ড়েছিলাম।

দ্বিতীয়তঃ, ইউরোপ ও আমেরিকার অন্ধদের উন্নতিমূলক কার্য্যাবলীর সহায়তার পক্ষে বেতার খুব প্রয়োজনীয় জিনিষ ব'লে প্রমাণিত হ'য়েছে। এই সব উন্নতিমূলক কার্য্যে অর্থ-সাহায্যের জন্য বেতারে জনসাধারণকে অনুরোধ করা হয়। ইংলণ্ডে প্রতি বৎসর বড় দিনের সময় বৃটিশ ব্রডকাষ্টিংএর সাহায্যে এইরূপ অনুরোধ জানান হয়।

তা ছাড়া, অনেক সময় বেতারের সাহায্যে বক্তৃতা প্রভৃতি দ্বারা অন্ধদের উন্নতির জন্য প্রচারকার্য্য করা হয়। আমেরিকায় একটি প্রদেশের বেতার কর্ত্তৃপক্ষ একজন অন্ধব্যক্তিকে কি ভাবে তাদের উন্নতি হ'তে পারে সে সম্বন্ধে বক্তৃতা দেবার জন্য সপ্তাহে একবার ক'রে নিমন্ত্রণ ক'রে থাকেন। নিউ ইয়র্কের প্রায় পনরটি বেতারকেন্দ্রের একটিতে আমাকে এই রকম একটি বক্তৃতা দিতে হ'য়েছিল।

বেতারে অন্ধদের উন্নতির জন্য আরও নানাভাবে প্রচারকার্য্য চালান হয়; যথা, অন্ধ স্কুলের ছেলে মেয়েরা বেতারে প্রায়ই গানবাজনা, অভিনয়, ইত্যাদি ক'রে থাকে। ও দেশের জনসাধারণ বেতারের এই অনুষ্ঠানগুলো খুব পছন্দ করেন এবং এইগুলো মাঝে মাঝে দেবার জন্য তাঁরা বেতার-পরিচালকদের প্রায়ই অনুরোধ করেন।

তৃতীয়তঃ, বেতারের সাহায্যে অন্ধ ব্যক্তিরা কিভাবে সমাজের সেবা ক'রতে পারে সে সম্বন্ধে এখন আমি দুই একটি কথা ব'লব। যারা বেতার-সম্বন্ধে শিক্ষালাভ ক'রতে ইচ্ছুক এই রকম অন্ধদের ইংলণ্ড ও আমেরিকায় বেতারবার্ত্তা প্রেরণ ও গ্রহণের প্রণালী শিক্ষা দেওয়া হয়। নিউ ইয়র্কের অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়ে আমি এক বৎসর ছিলুম; সেখানে এ বিষয়ে শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা আছে। এখন

সেখানে দশ জন অন্ধ ছাত্র একজন অন্ধ শিক্ষকের নিকট এ বিষয়ে শিক্ষালাভ ক'রছে।

কয়েকজন অন্ধ ছাত্র এই শিক্ষা শেষ ক'রে গভর্ণমেণ্ট-নির্দ্দিষ্ট পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ হ'য়ে এ বিষয়ে কাজ ক'রবার জন্য লাইসেন্স পেয়েছে। আমেরিকায় অবৈতনিক বেতারকর্ম্মীদের হ্যাম বলা হয় এবং এইরকম একজন দৃষ্টিহীন হ্যাম আমেরিকার বিগত ১৯৩৬ সালের বন্যার সময় বন্যা-পীড়িত অঞ্চলে আর্ত্তদের যথেষ্ট সেবা ক'রেছিল। ঐ সব অঞ্চল থেকে শত শত প্রয়োজনীয় সংবাদ সে বেতারের সাহায্যে নানা স্থানে প্রেরণ ক'রেছিল। সময় সময় ঘণ্টায় বিয়াল্লিশটি সংবাদও তাকে পাঠাতে হ'য়েছিল।

আমেরিকার প্রায় সমস্ত সংবাদপত্রেই তার এই অদ্ভুত সেবাকার্য্যের কথা প্রকাশিত হয় এবং এ বিষয়ে তার অভিজ্ঞতা বর্ণনা ক'রবার জন্য নানা বেতারকেন্দ্র থেকে তাকে নিমন্ত্রণ করা হয়।

উপযুক্ত শিক্ষা পেলে অন্যান্য অন্ধ ব্যক্তিরাও প্রয়োজনের সময় এইরকম ভাবে সমাজের সেবা ক'রতে পারে।

চতুর্থতঃ, ইউরোপ ও আমেরিকার কয়েকজন অন্ধ ব্যক্তি বেতার-বিভাগে কাজ ক'রে জীবিকা অর্জন ক'রছে। তাদের ভিতর কেউ কেউ জাহাজে বেতারবার্ত্তা-প্রেরণের কাজ ক'রছে এবং তাদের কাজ বেশ সন্তোষজনক হ'য়েছে। কয়েকজন বেতার-অনুষ্ঠান-পরিচালকের কাজে বিশেষ প্রশংসা লাভ ক'রেছে। কেউ বা জনসাধারণের কাছে বেতার যন্ত্র বিক্রী ক'রে বেশ অর্থোপার্জন ক'রছে।

উপসংহারে আমার বক্তব্য এই যে, আজকের সন্ধ্যায় আপনাদের কাছে যে কথাগুলো বল্লুম, তা থেকেই আপনারা বুঝতে পারবেন যে, ইউরোপ ও আমেরিকায় অন্ধদের জীবনে বেতার বিধাতার আশীর্ব্বাদের মত হ'য়েছে। ভারতবর্ষে অন্ধদের জীবনে বেতারের স্থান এইরকম প্রয়োজনীয় করে তোলা কি সম্ভব নয়? ইউরোপ ও আমেরিকায় প্রায় সমস্ত অন্ধ ব্যক্তিই উপার্জনশীল এবং তাদের জ্ঞান ও আনন্দ দেবার জন্য বহুসংখ্যক পত্রিকা ব্রেলে প্রকাশিত হয়। তা সত্ত্বেও ও দেশে অন্ধদের উন্নতির জন্য বেতার একেবারে অপরিহার্য্য হ'য়ে উঠেছে। এ বিষয়ে আমাদের দেশের অবস্থা সম্পূর্ণ বিপরীত। এখানকার অন্ধদের উপার্জনের পথ এখন পর্য্যন্ত খুব অল্প এবং তাদের জ্ঞান বা আনন্দ দেবার জন্য একখানাও ব্রেল পত্রিকা নেই। এই সব কারণে বেতারের প্রয়োজন তাদের চেয়ে আর কাদের বেশী হ'তে পারে বলুন? ইংলণ্ডের মত এ দেশেও

অন্ধদের বিনা ব্যয়ে বেতারের লাইসেন্স দেবার জন্য আইন করা উচিত এবং তাদের ভিতর যারা অভাবগ্রস্ত তাদের বিনা মূল্যে বেতার যন্ত্র বিতরণ করা উচিত। আমি আশা করি, গভর্ণমেণ্ট এবং সহৃদয় জনসাধারণ এই একান্ত-প্রয়োজনীয় বিষয়টি বিশেষ সহানুভূতির সঙ্গে বিবেচনা ক'রে দেখবেন।

কোলকাতার বেতারকর্তৃপক্ষ অন্ধদের উন্নতিমূলক কার্য্যাবলীর একটা বিষয়ে আমাকে আজ কিছু ব'লবার সুযোগ দিয়েছেন ব'লে আমি তাঁদের নিকট অত্যন্ত কৃতজ্ঞ এবং সেজন্য আমি তাঁদের আন্তরিক ধন্যবাদ জানাচ্ছি। তাঁদের কাছে আমার এই অনুরোধ যে, তাঁরা যেন এ দেশের অন্ধদের উন্নতির জন্য যথাসাধ্য চেষ্টা করেন। আমার দৃঢ় বিশ্বাস যে, ও সব দেশের বেতারপ্রতিষ্ঠানগুলোর মত তাঁরাও এ বিষয়ে অনেক কিছু ক'রবার সহায়তা ক'রতে পারেন।

MY QUESTIONNAIRE *

1. What is the total number of schools for the blind in India and where are they situated?

2. Is there any organisation for the blind in India except blind schools? If so, how many of such organisations are there, what are their activities, and where are they situated?

3. What is the total number of blind persons and blind schools in your province or State?

4. Is there any arrangement for providing free reading and free guide services to the blind in India? If so, where and how are such facilities provided?

5. Is there any library containing Braille books for blind readers in India? If so, how many of such libraries are there, where are they situated, and how

* This questionnaire was circulated to all the institutions for the blind, known to me at that time, in India in August, 1938.

many volumes of books each of these libraries contains? (Please mention the number of volumes in different languages.)

6. What are the social and legal privileges and concessions which the blind persons of India enjoy as distinguished from those enjoyed by seeing persons?

7. What (or what more) social and legal privileges and concessions should, in your opinion, be extended to the blind persons of this country?

8. What are your proposals to bring about a correct understanding of the seeing public towards blind persons, and *vice versa*?

9. What are the ways in which the blind persons in this country usually earn their livelihood? What kind of work provides more employment to the blind of India? What is, in your opinion, the percentage of the blind who are self-supporting?

10. How do you propose to solve the marriage problems of the blind? What percentage of the blind persons in India has, in your opinion, married? Do you support a marriage where both the parties are blind? What are your arguments for and (or) against such a marriage? How many instances of such marriage have come to your knowledge? How do you propose to solve the marriage problems of blind girls?

11. What, in your opinion, is the percentage of blindness in India due to hereditary causes?

12. What do you think is the percentage of blindness in India due to industrial accidents? What measures have been taken to lessen the number of such occurrences? Is the Workmen's Compensation Act in force in our country?

13. What is the minimum degree of vision fixed by Government regulations in India, qualifying a person for Government services?

14. How many adaptations of English Braille are in use in India? When and by whom was each of these adaptations made?

15. Has there been any conference of all or some of the blind schools of India? If so, where and when such conferences were held?

16. What, in your opinion, is an ideal school for the blind?

17. Has there been any provision in India for teaching and training blind persons who have lost their sight beyond their school-going years? If so, where such training is imparted and what does this training consist of? When was it started for the first time?

18. When was your school started and with how many pupils? (Please give a full historical survey of your school from the time of its establishment down to the present day.)

19. On how many acres of land is your school situated? Is it your school's own property?

20. What is the total value of the property of your school? (The equipment, machines, etc., may be included in this valuation.)

21. How many pupils of either sex are attending your school at present? How many of them are residential and how many are day-scholars?

22. Is there any restriction of age for admission to your school? Is there any fixed age at which your pupils are supposed to leave the school?

23. Are the pupils of your school required to pay for their board, lodge and tuition? If so, what is the charge for each of these items per mensem?

24. Does any pupil receive exemption from any of these payments? If so, how many pupils are there at present so exempted? Besides these exemptions, does your school render any financial help to its pupils in any other way? If so, what are the circumstances under which such assistance is rendered?

25. How many boys and girls have attended your school (excluding the present set of pupils) since the establishment of the school? What percentage of these ex-pupils has become self-supporting?

26 What are the subjects taught in your school?

27. Generally speaking, what type of education is, in your opinion, most suitable for the blind—literary, musical or manual?

28. How many ex-pupils of your school have received University education? (Please give details about the extent and nature of their University education, reckoning from the time of the establishment of your school.)

29. What games and recreations are provided for the pupils of your school?

30. What sort of physical education is provided for the pupils of your school?

31. How many teachers of either sex are there in your school and how many of them are especially trained for teaching the blind? Where was this special training obtained?

32. What are the maximum and minimum monthly salaries of the teachers of your school? (The

salary of the head of the school may be stated if it be the maximum salary, even if he or she does not take part in teaching.)

33. How many of the teachers are totally blind and how many are partially sighted?

34. What are your views about employing blind teachers for the blind?

35. How many people are there on the pay-roll of your school, excluding the teachers?

36. What is the annual income of your school? What are the sources of this income and how much from each source?

37. What is the annual expenditure of your school? What are the items of expenditure and how much on each item?

38. Is there any special arrangement for teaching the partially-sighted children in your school? If so, what is the nature of this instruction and when was it introduced?

39. Is there any pupil in your school who is blind and deaf, or blind and mute or blind, deaf and mute at the same time? If so, how many of such pupils are there and how are they taught?

40. Is there a Braille press in your school? If so, when was it installed and what sort of books are printed therein?

41. Have talking-books been introduced in your school? If so, when were they introduced?

42. What special arrangements are there for the instruction of girls as distinguished from those intended for the boys of your school?

43. Do you think that blind boys and girls are more prone to sexual vices than their seeing compatriots? How many cases of sex delinquency have

come to your knowledge? (Please state the length of time during which these cases have come to your notice.)

44. From the observation of the behaviour of your pupils, can you say that blindness is responsible for some special good and (or) bad points which are usually absent among the seeing pupils? If so, what are those good and (or) bad points? (Please make an exhaustive list of them.)

45. What is the administrative organisation of your school?

46. What are the noteworthy features of your school as distinguished from those of other blind schools?

WIRELESS AND THE BLIND *

The first thing I should like to say is that the right way to call the subject of my talk this evening is, "Wireless and the Blind," and not "Wireless for the Blind." The reason for this, as will be more evident later, is that I shall describe to you not only what the wireless has done and is doing for the blind, but also what blind persons have done and are doing for society through the instrumentality of the wireless.

* This article, published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 17th August, 1938, is the English version of a Bengali talk broadcast from the Calcutta studio of the All-India Radio on the 8th August, 1938. The talk in Bengali has also been incorporated into the present book for the benefit of Bengali-readers.

Every one recognises the manifold blessings that the invention of wireless has conferred on humanity. But ask any one except a blind person to enumerate these blessings and see if the benefits which blind persons derive out of wireless are mentioned at all. I am almost positive that these will be left untouched.

But I can assure you that the invention of wireless has brought about a complete revolution in the lives of blind persons in Europe and America. To a blind person there, the radio has proved to be a more helpful friend than anything else, except, of course, Braille, *i.e.*, the system of reading and writing for visually handicapped persons.

In India, the only thing the blind persons do with radio is to listen to it, and even for doing it, they have not as much scope and facility as they should have. This is why the benefits of wireless for blind persons are not so obvious either to themselves or to the seeing people of our country.

These benefits of wireless I should like to place under four heads: (*i*) entertainment and knowledge which it gives to the blind; (*ii*) its role as an agency to advance the cause of the blind; (*iii*) the way in which blind persons may serve society through it; and (*iv*) the opportunities of employment that it provides to the blind.

(*i*) The visual part of the world having naturally been denied to the blind, its vocal and sound-part has acquired more significance and importance for them. They obviously depend on this part of life for a large measure of their guidance and inspiration Many of their joys and sorrows flow out of it.

Now, in the field of radio, so long as television does not join hands with it, the blind as well as the seeing persons are placed on the same footing so far as its advantages and disadvantages are concerned. It seems to me that wireless is one of the very few things in which sighted persons do not enjoy a natural advantage over their sightless brothers and sisters just for the mere possession of sight. The reason for this levelling effect of radio is to be sought in the fact that radio is a part of the sound-world and here blind persons do not suffer from any inherent disability in relation to their seeing compatriots.

Quite a good amount of entertainment for which people had to go out from one place to another are now brought to the parlour or to the bed-room of every home, and this has proved to be a special advantage to blind persons, for whom movements without a guide constitute an obvious handicap, and, as you know, guides in these cases are not easily obtainable. Sightless persons may now spend some time every day and get a plenty of recreation and entertainment out of the talks, music and other items of a radio-programme which would not otherwise have been within their easy reach. In England and America, radio journals are also published in Braille so that the blind listeners may know the programmes in advance. Radio has thus become a very welcome company in their lonely hours.

Even those who suffer from the double infirmity of blindness and deafness at the same time, do also derive a good deal of pleasure from the radio-programmes. This may sound to be rather strange; but let me recount to you my personal experience about this phenomenon. While I was in New York, I

had the honour of meeting Miss Helen Keller, the world-famous blind-deaf-mute lady, at her residence. She demonstrated to me how she could tell the rhythm of a piece of music by simply touching the radio. She told me that she could appreciate the radio-programmes by just feeling the vibrations of the radio. In this way, she can correctly say if piano, violin, classical music or jazz is played on the radio.

In addition to entertainment, blind persons derive a good deal of information and knowledge from the radio-programmes which it is very difficult for them to obtain otherwise. For instance, sightless persons do not always get friends or relatives to read out the daily newspaper to them. Without the news items of a radio-programme, many blind persons would have remained in complete ignorance of what is happening in the outside world.

The value and the necessity of the radio in the lives of blind people have been recognised by the States and the public of Europe and America alike. By a Statute of the British Parliament, the blind persons in Great Britain have been granted their radio license free of charge. Besides, the Parliament sanctioned money for the free distribution of fifteen thousand radio-sets to the blind in Britain. In America, no one, blind or sighted, has to pay any fee for the radio license. There are some organisations who raise money to provide free radio-sets to needy blind persons. Once I read an appeal in an American journal asking the blind persons to apply immediately for free radio-sets, as many of these had remained undisposed.

(*ii*) In Europe and America, radio has proved to be a very potent factor in promoting the welfare work for the blind. Several appeals for funds, necessary for this work, are made on the radio. In England, such appeals are made through the B. B. C. on the Christmas day every year.

Besides, the propaganda for the cause of the blind is conducted through radio by means of talks given by persons interested in this field. In one of the States of America, the wireless authorities invite a blind person once a week to deliver a talk on some aspect of the welfare work for the blind. I also had the pleasure of giving such a talk at one of about fifteen radio centers in the New York City.

Propaganda is also carried on through the musical and dramatic broadcasts by blind boys and girls of different schools. The general public of the Western countries seem to be very fond of such broadcasts, and they often send requests to the wireless authorities to sponsor these programmes.

(*iii*) Let me now narrate to you how blind persons are capable of rendering service to society through wireless activities.

Both in England and America, instruction is given to willing blind young men and women to receive and transmit wireless messages. There is such a class at the New York Institute for the Education of the Blind, where I stayed for a year, and there are, at present, ten blind students taking this course under a blind teacher.

Some blind persons, on their completion of wireless instruction, have taken the requisite Government Examination and have obtained licenses for receiving and transmitting wireless messages. In

America, the amateur wireless operators are called " Hams," and one blind " Ham " rendered remarkable service in the flood areas of the U.S.A. in 1936. He handled hundreds of urgent radio messages from the distressed regions and relayed them or transmitted them through the telephone to the proper quarters. At times, he had to handle as many as forty-two messages an hour. For this wonderful work, he was mentioned in all the papers throughout the length and breadth of the United States and he was also invited by various radio-centres to deliver talks regarding his experiences.

There is no reason why services like this cannot be rendered by other blind persons in times of need or distress.

(*iv*) The wireless has provided employment to a number of blind persons in Europe and America. Some have been appointed as wireless operators on the ship and their services have been found to be quite satisfactory. A few have been successful as radio announcers. Some are working as agents in selling radio-sets.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it will be quite evident how wireless has been a veritable boon to sightless persons in Europe and America. Is it not possible to make wireless useful in the same way to the blind persons in India? Most of the blind individuals in Europe and America are employed and scores of journals are published in Braille in order to bring knowledge and information within their reach. Yet the radio has become such an inspiring

company for them. Things are quite different in our country; very few of our blind persons are employed and there is not a single Braille journal to give them knowledge and inspiration. So, our blind people need the radio more than any one else. As in England, free radio license should be granted to our blind persons and radio sets should be distributed free to those sightless persons who cannot afford to buy one. I hope this matter will be taken up by our Government and public.

I thank the Calcutta broadcasting authorities for giving me this opportunity of saying a few words about one aspect of the welfare work for the blind. I request them to keep their interests alive in the activities towards the promotion of the cause of the blind in India, to which, I am sure, they are in a position to contribute a great deal.

GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND *

(Summary of a speech delivered at the Alsatian German Shepherd Dog Club, held at the Wellington Y.M.C.A., Calcutta, on the 4th September, 1938, under the Chairmanship of Captain H. Harrison.)

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

The most noticeable disadvantage of blindness is the difficulty of free movement. A blind person is greatly handicapped both in his work and recreation on account of his inability in travelling alone. It is

* Published in the *Statesman*, Calcutta, 10th September, 1938.

not financially possible for every sightless individual to pay for the services of a guide.

The Guide Dog Movement has solved this problem to a great extent. A blind person can, now-a-days, go anywhere he pleases with the help of a trained dog. Miss Smith, a blind American lady, who is a Reporter of the *Buffalo Express* in the State of New York, tours around the Continent of America and Canada with the help of her dog in order to collect materials for her paper.

There are schools in Europe and America in order to train dogs for this particular type of service. I had the opportunity of visiting one such school in America, known as the " Seeing Eye." Here the dogs are brought at a very early age and are subjected to a regular course of training by the Trainer who keeps himself blindfolded for a few days in order to get the dogs used to a blind person.

One who wishes to have a trained dog, has also to go through a course of training for at least a month. He has to live in the school and get himself used to a dog. During the period of training, he is not allowed to be visited by anybody as he has to devote his whole attention to his dog. It is obviously not very easy to bring about a temperamental fitness between a human being and an animal to such an extent as to ensure the safety of the life of the former when both of them are let loose in a crowded street full of various types of risk. This is why every person is not suited to every dog, and it is a hard task of the Trainer to select the right dog for the right person. Any error in this selection may lead to dangerous consequences. It is indeed a

memorable day for a blind individual when he first sets out with his dog and returns to the school without any unpleasant experience. Of course, the first few outings are usually supervised by the Trainer.

The dogs trained are invariably of the Alsatian breed as it is only they who are supposed to have the necessary intelligence for performing this difficult task. Of late, other breeds of dogs are being experimented for this purpose.

A blind person is required to pay 150 Dollars for a dog, including the fee for training. But he is allowed to pay this money at any time he is able to and by easy instalments extending over a long time. No one grudges this payment as it brings him the rare gift of independent movement in spite of blindness.

The way in which these guide-dogs help the blind under different circumstances is really wonderful. In obedience to a very few simple instructions from their masters, *viz.*, "right," "left," "Straight," "sit," etc., these dogs guide them wherever they want to go. These dogs can understand the traffic lights and cross the busy streets with their sightless masters in perfect safety. They can even judge the height and projection of a structure and they guide their masters in such a way as to keep them at a safe distance from getting hurt. I have not yet heard of any accident in which a blind person has been involved by the carelessness or misjudgment of his canine helper.

In addition to this guide service, the trained dogs assist their masters in several other ways. They pick up things dropped accidentally on the ground by the latter, and the funny part is that even if the

things, thus picked up, belong to somebody else, they are always given to the masters. The dogs always keep a vigilant watch over the safety of their masters and get very excited whenever they think that their masters are going to be hurt. They lie patiently at the feet of their masters and jump up whenever they are required to carry out any order. The only time that they disobey their masters is when the latter, on account of their blindness and the consequent inability to judge the environmental conditions at times, issue an order, the carrying out of which may lead to some inconvenience or accident. All this may sound incredible, but, never-the-less, it is true and may be observed by any one interested.

It is curious that almost all these trained dogs are females. On my enquiring about the reason of this, I was told by a Trainer that the female dogs were more reliable than the male ones for this type of service. His reply to my supplementary question as to whether this truth was equally applicable to human beings, was rather evasive.

I should like to conclude my talk of this evening by hoping that this meeting will be the first step to the establishment of a centre in India where dogs will be trained for the blind. This will make the blind persons much more happy and useful as a result of independent movement.

A RECEPTION *

(Summary of a speech delivered at the St. Paul's Cathedral College, Calcutta, on the 7th February, 1940, under the Chairmanship of Dr. P. G. Bridge, Principal of the College.†)

DR. BRIDGE, MEMBERS OF THE STAFF, AND STUDENTS,

Mrs. Roy and I are extremely grateful to you for according us this warm reception to-day. As an ex-student of this college, I have many pleasant memories of the time when I not only studied here, but also lived in the compound as a boarder. After leaving this college, I studied at other centres of learning in Calcutta, but I never found such a democratic atmosphere anywhere as at this college. The traditional isolationism between the professors and the students was practically absent here. I remember many occasions when several professors came to my room and spent hours with me discussing various points of interest.

The St. Paul's College is particularly noted for an important step in the education of the blind in Bengal. It is the first college in this province to open its door to the blind aspirants for college education. It made some adjustments to suit the peculiar needs of the sightless students. Other colleges gradually followed its lead in the matter of admitting blind students. The blind of Bengal will always feel

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† Dr. Bridge died in 1942.



MRS. EVELYN ROY

Wife of the Author of this Book, who has been a great inspiration to the Author in his work for the Blind

a deep debt of gratitude to this college for this bold step.

Regarding my experiences abroad, I shall emphasize just one point to-day, and this is the ability of the blind persons in the Western countries and Japan to travel alone. Almost all the sightless individuals I met in those countries, move about in the streets either alone or with the help of guide-dogs. This free movement enables them to go anywhere they wish and to attend their professions and recreations regularly and punctually.

Following the tradition in this country, I never travelled alone while I was here. But I mastered this practice with the help of my blind friends abroad and went everywhere unaided in London and New York. This enabled me to go to the universities, meet friends and keep all sorts of appointments in time. One of my professors of Columbia University rightly remarked that the acquisition of this ability to go about independently was the most important thing that I had learnt in America—even more important than the M.A. degree, which I had obtained from Columbia University.

While travelling alone in the streets of New York and London, I noticed many wonderful instances of silent and sympathetic helpfulness of the American and the British people. It is a very painful contrast for me to remember that most of the Indian students passed me almost unnoticed and without offering any help in the streets of London, while the British men and women came to help me before I had asked for any assistance. It is owing to this lack of social training on the part of most of the Indian people that I do not travel alone in the streets of Calcutta

even now, although I did so in the strange and foreign lands.

In spite of it, some blind persons should take the initiative in this matter and should start going about alone here. This will educate the seeing people to discharge their natural and obvious duty towards their sightless compatriots travelling unaided. Besides, there is a rare pleasure experienced by a blind person when he can go anywhere and at any time without waiting for a guide, and every sightless individual should have some amount of this unique pleasurable feeling. The value of being able to travel alone for the purpose of going to work is too obvious to need any elaboration.

SPEECH AT THE CALCUTTA BLIND SCHOOL*

(Delivered on the 6th April, 1940, under the Chairmanship of Mr. A. K. Fazlul Haq, the then Premier of Bengal.)

Honourable Premier of Bengal, Honourable President of the Court of Governors of the Calcutta Blind School, Honourable Secretary of the Calcutta Blind School, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a unique pleasure and privilege for me to be able to speak to you this evening. I am indeed very happy to be with you in the same premises where I lived as a pupil for a number of years. I distinctly

* Published in the *Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta, 7th April, 1940.

recollect several prize distributions of the Calcutta Blind School when, instead of speaking to you as I am now, I used to appear on the stage in order to entertain you with music and other performances, the like of which you will witness later in the evening.

I was admitted into the Calcutta Blind School as a pupil in 1919. Since my leaving the school in 1927, I have always had the keenest interest in the work and progress of the school. I take this opportunity to pay my tribute to the authorities of the school for their untiring efforts towards its progressive development and expansion.

I am also very glad to note that the people of our province are gradually waking up to the needs and problems of visually handicapped persons of Bengal. The very fact that the Government of Bengal and the University of Calcutta awarded me scholarships to study the up-to-date methods employed in welfare work for the blind abroad, is one of the surest indications of public concern and responsibility towards the amelioration of the existing conditions of the visually handicapped in our country. Blindness is more of a social than an individual problem, and this problem will never be solved if blind persons are left to fight their battles all alone without receiving moral and material support from society as a whole.

I shall now, ladies and gentlemen, relate to you just a few of the many advanced features of welfare work for the blind which I found in existence during my study-trips to Europe, America, Canada, and Japan. The time at my disposal is very limited, and I can hardly touch these points, much less discuss them in details.

In the first place, the work for the blind in those countries is conducted on a very scientific basis. Accurate definitions of blindness and partial vision have been formulated, and statistics of blind persons have been taken with great care and precision. In the United States of America, it has recently been decided to take a comprehensive census of blind individuals, in which the cause of blindness and the degree of vision retained in each case, will be recorded.

I may state in this connection that the Government of India have decided not to include statistics of the blind and other physically handicapped persons in the forthcoming census report. This decision on the part of the Central Government will be regretted by all working in the interest of handicapped persons. I am in correspondence with the local Superintendent of Census Operations for the purpose of convincing him of the necessity and importance of collecting reliable statistics of all handicapped groups, especially those of the visually handicapped. I hope that all of you present here will kindly do all in your power to have the figures of handicapped persons included in the Census Returns of 1941.

In the second place, every progressive institution and organization for the blind is, as it were, a living organism, adding every day to its own stature and to the lives of blind individuals. It is not isolated and segregated from the community, but is organically joined with the throbbings of the outside social life. The government and public are working in complete co-operation to improve the lot of the blind, and the blind themselves are, by their successful

careers, justifying the confidence placed in them. Almost every day, there appear in the newspapers and on the radio accounts and announcements of the activities and achievements of some blind person or some blind institution. Lectures on blindness and on the problems of the blind are frequently arranged at Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, and other distinguished places. In short, the workers for the blind in those countries have, through constant and intelligent publicity, succeeded in enlisting a tremendous amount of public support and sympathy. This explains how about a dozen institutions and organizations for the blind in London or New York City alone secure adequate funds to carry on their work most efficiently and on a large scale.

Besides, a vigorous research is being carried on in the psychology of the blind, methods of their instruction, and in special apparatus necessary for educating them. As a result of this research, new theories of blind education and psychology are replacing the old ones, and new and more convenient educational appliances are coming into use.

It should also be mentioned that in every country I visited, annual or biennial conference of the workers and instructors for the blind are held. This kind of co-operative work advances the cause of the visually handicapped more quickly and effectively than what may be accomplished by the various schools working separately without any attempt at correlating their activities.

This is, ladies and gentlemen, what I mean when I say that blind work in the countries I visited is, as it were, a living organism. What are the reasons for this phenomenal progress in welfare work

for the blind in those countries? In my humble opinion, they are primarily three:

First, the moral and material support from the Government and the public towards the amelioration of the conditions of visually handicapped persons, to which reference has already been made, is indeed very generous and open to all irrespective of any social distinction. In Great Britain and the United States of America, both Central and Local Governments have started special departments for the visually handicapped, and have appointed blind persons in charge of these departments. They also contribute large amounts of money towards the maintenance of educational institutions and other welfare organizations for the blind. In the state of New York, for instance, the Government pay 600 dollars (about 1,800 rupees) per annum for the education of each pupil.

Secondly, the blind work has become so advanced and well organized that it can attract highly educated people to shoulder the responsibilities involved in this work. It has been realised that mere technical experience is not enough to carry on this work successfully. Those responsible for administration of an educational institution are almost invariably recipients of high academic distinctions, so that they can adequately grasp the psychological problems of the blind and can inspire confidence among the public. To mention only one instance: Dr. Merle E. Frampton, the Principal of the New York Institute for the Education of the Blind, to whom I am indebted for his many acts of kindness, is a Ph.D. of Harvard University and was previously a professor of Sociology at the Boston University.

Lastly, there is no unhealthy rivalry among the different institutions and organizations for the blind. As stated before, there are about a dozen centres of blind work in London as well as in the New York City. The authorities of all these organizations are working in perfect harmony to promote the cause of the blind.

To come to the third important feature of blind education abroad The education of the blind has become such a technical and a growing subject that no one without a systematic and scientific training can render efficient service in any blind institution or organization. Such a training course was introduced in Great Britain and America many years ago. The College of Teachers for the Blind in Great Britain has arranged regular courses in the education of the blind. No person is allowed to join any blind school as a teacher if he is not a recipient of a diploma from this college. The Board of Education in the United Kingdom stops its annual grant to a school engaging a teacher who has not obtained such a diploma. In America, several courses in the education of the visually handicapped have been introduced at Columbia, Harvard, and California State Universities. Anyone wishing to work for the blind has to obtain training from one of these Universities. Recently, such a training programme has also been initiated at a training college in Japan.

The fourth and the last feature of blind education abroad is related to the question of the ultimate goal of a blind institution. What should be the final aims of a blind school? This question has been answered differently by different educators of the blind. I think that every blind school should have

two ultimate aims in view, *viz.*, to change the unreasonable public attitude towards the blind, and to prepare the blind boys and girls for their future economic independence.

In every country, especially here in India, the public have very poor and inadequate notions about the mental life of blind individuals. Do blind people have personalities different from those of the sighted, or are they normal sighted people in the dark? It is usually thought by the public at large that sightless persons are different from those with sight and that they live in a world of their own. This belief is the source of the prejudice and distrust, which cause so much suffering and annoyance to blind individuals. However, the authorities on blind psychology have come to the conclusion that blind people do not constitute a class by themselves; they are normal people *minus* the sense of vision. Blindness is just an individual difference like colour, stature, and so on.

It should be realised that the lot of blind people can never be improved unless and until they are credited with normal mentality and regarded as necessary components of society. As Miss Helen Keller has remarked: "The public must learn that the blind man is neither a genius nor a freak nor an idiot. He has a mind which can be educated, a hand which can be trained, ambitions which it is right for him to strive to realise, and it is the duty of the public to help him to make the best of himself so that he can win light through work."

The problem of the economic independence of blind persons is closely linked with the public attitude towards them. The public are usually very

suspicious about the abilities of the blind and are, therefore, reluctant to entrust them with any sort of work. The schools for the blind have grave responsibilities towards their ex-pupils in the matter of employment. They cannot afford to shirk responsibilities towards their ex-pupils, as is the case in schools for sighted children. Dr. Farrell, the Director of the Perkins Institution for the Blind, one of the largest schools for the blind in the United States, has rightly observed that the purpose of a blind institution fails completely if its former pupils do not succeed in securing employment.

In order to solve the problems of changing the public attitude towards the blind and of their economic security, all the progressive institutions and organisations for the blind have appointed publicity and placement officers, whose business is to acquaint the public with the needs and abilities of blind individuals. These officers have succeeded in inducing the legislatures to enact laws protecting the blind workers from sighted competition. In Germany, for instance, every factory or firm must employ a certain percentage of its workers from among the handicapped group. In Great Britain and America, the blind persons are eligible even for government appointments.

The question of economic independence of the blind may be looked at from a different angle. Real sympathy is shown to blind people not by feeding them at public or private expense and keeping them idle at home, but by giving them education and burdening them with work and responsibility. Without this sense of responsibility, the blind can never take their legitimate place by the side of their sighted

peers. As a blind French physician wrote: " So long as the blind can still bring their stone, however small it may be, to the building of civilisation or bring happiness to their kind, they feel that they live; and, whatever be the wounds received, they are not out of the battle of life—the inequality of arms only increases their ardour."

These, ladies and gentlemen, are some of the many ways in which the workers for the blind abroad are trying to make blind individuals useful to themselves and to society. We have our own problems here. There are about 37,000 blind persons in Bengal, and the Calcutta Blind School is the only institution of its kind in this province which is trying to solve some of their problems. It is indeed a huge task for one organisation to fulfil the various needs of so many thousands of blind people of this province. But, I am sure that, with the help and encouragement of government and public of Bengal, the Calcutta Blind School will be able to increase its usefulness and become one of the best institutions of its kind in India.

I thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for allowing me to take up some of your valuable time. I hope that you will show your appreciation of one of God's best gifts, *viz.*, *sight* by helping the blind of your province to help themselves.

MY SECOND TRIP ROUND THE WORLD

(Summary of a speech delivered at the Chowringhee Y.M.C.A., Calcutta, on the 2nd May, 1940, under the Chairmanship of Mr. A. K. Shah, Principal, Calcutta Blind School.)

When I left Calcutta for Europe for the second time on the 20th September, 1938, on the strength of a scholarship awarded me by the Government of Bengal, for the purpose of working for the Ph.D. degree at the London University in Psychological and Sociological Problems of Blindness and of the Blind, I could hardly foresee that my research-work would be interrupted by another world war, and that another trip round the world was in store for me before my return to India.

On my way to England, nothing very important happened, except that the news of the crisis in Czechoslovakia, received from the ship wireless, made all of us a little nervous, and completely upset a few. Some of us even decided to return to India from Marseilles, which was the next stoppage for our vessel. However, the fate of Czechoslovakia was sealed at Munich, and every one of us pushed on with his pre-arranged plan.

On reaching London, I found almost every one excited over the Czechoslovakian affair. Some discussed what happened, and others were busy in pointing out what might have happened if the Munich parley did not turn out to be what it was. I heard that many Indian students had given up their studies and left for India during the days of the crisis.

However, I started my work at the Institute of Education, London University. I carried on my research under the guidance of Prof. H. R. Hamley, the head of Higher Degrees at the University of London.

I am thankful to the authorities of the British Museum for providing me with special facilities for my study in the reading-room of the Museum.

In addition to my university work, I had to teach for a few hours every week at the Swiss Cottage School for the blind, which is one of the best and largest institutions of its kind in Great Britain. I found the pupils very interesting, who had lots of questions to ask, but very few to answer.

Very soon I realised that there were not many books, required for my particular thesis, in the British libraries. So I proceeded to the United States of America for the purpose of collecting necessary data for my research. This was my fourth voyage over the Atlantic, but not a very pleasant one. The ocean was very rough throughout the whole trip, and, consequently, there was very little going on among the passengers on the ship.

I expected some trouble from the Immigration Authorities on my arrival at New York, as I had some unfortunate experience on two previous occasions. But, since I went as a Government scholar this time, I was spared the usual trouble and humiliation reserved especially for the Asiatics wishing to enter the United States. Notwithstanding all my admiration for America and the American people, I am compelled to admit that the Immigration Laws of that country are very discriminating against the people of Asia. I have known many Indians who re-

ceived unduly harsh and insulting treatment at the hands of the Immigration Authorities. I wish India had the power to take adequate steps in preventing the occurrence of these unpleasant incidents.

Fortunately, the American people are much better than their Immigration Laws. I always feel at home when I am in America or with the American people. They are usually very friendly and informal in their ways. They know very little about India, although they are always anxious to know about the social and religious customs of the Indian people, their political aspirations, and their attitude towards the present war. What most of the Americans know about India are its snakes, Yogis and Maharajas.

Two most exciting events during my stay in America were the opening of the World's Fair in New York, and the visit of His Majesty King George VI to the United States.

The New York World's Fair was the largest that was ever held, and although it proved to be a commercial failure, it provided a grand pageant of material progress and wealth.

I finished my work in America and was prepared to return to England. In the meantime, war broke out in Europe, and I was advised to return to India. Since coming through Japan was the safest course, I decided to take that route.

I visited Japan for the first time in 1938. Life in Japan seemed to be very different during my second visit. The people appeared to be more worn out and impoverished. Prices of almost every thing went up. Many buses were using coal in the absence of petrol. More women were engaged in work

and business on account of more and more men going to China as soldiers.

In spite of all this, the Japanese are the most united nation I have ever seen. There is no protest against the war in China. Every one takes his suffering as inevitable. The whole nation dreams of the so-called "New Order of the East." They claim for themselves a Monroe Doctrine in Asia as the Americans do in the New Hemisphere.

After we left Japan, our ship called at Honkong, Singapore, Penang, and Colombo before we reached Bombay. The trip was long and it took about five weeks; but it was full of pleasant and varied interests.

Coming to the question of work for the blind in America, I may mention that the present-day phenomenal advance in this sphere of activity is due mainly to six factors:—

First, one uniform Braille type was adopted for all the English-speaking countries in 1932. This has encouraged the printing of embossed books and periodicals.

In India, there are numerous systems of Braille in existence. Unless we can devise a uniform Braille type for the whole of the country, there will be plenty of waste and duplication in the printing of literature for the blind.

Secondly, intelligence and vocational tests have been adapted for use with blind children. This is a very important step which should be taken in our country without any further delay.

Thirdly, the establishment of the American Association of Instructors for the Blind has centralised and crystallised the work for the blind in that

country. There is an urgnt need of such an organisation in India.

Fourthly, the American Printing House for the Blind has advanced the cause of blind education by printing text-books for school and college students and books on literature and science for the use of sightless persons in general. It receives 175,000 dollars (about 600,000 rupees) per annum from the Federal Government.

We do not have any organisation of this kind in India. The need of such a welfare centre can hardly be emphasised.

Fifthly, the American Foundation for the Blind, which is a clearing house for the blind in the United States, has contributed more towards the progress of work for the visually handicapped in that country than any other single organisation.

It carries on research in the education of the blind, keeps statistics of blind persons, publishes journals for the benefit of workers and instructors for the blind, makes talking-books at its well-equipped studio, and is engaged in various other activities towards the promotion of the cause of the visually handicapped persons in America. It is gratifying to note that this work is being carried on most efficiently under Mr. Robert B. Irwin, the Executive Director, who is himself blind.

I hope that an organisation, like the American Foundation, may be established in India very soon.

Lastly, and this is a very important factor, the introduction of training of teachers and workers for the blind has made blind work most systematic and efficient. At least six universities in America, in-

cluding the famous Harvard and Columbia Universities, have introduced such training programmes.

The initiation of a training course of this kind is an indispensable need in our country.

Besides the above-mentioned six factors, I should state briefly the actual manner in which the work for the visually handicapped is handled in the United States.

The visually handicapped persons have been divided into three groups: blind, partially-sighted, and partially-blind.

There are about sixty-five residential institutions for the blind in America. These institutions are equipped with the latest scientific inventions in blind education, and directed under the guidance of highly educated and technically capable principals.

The partially-sighted children are taught in ordinary schools, but under special conditions. The sight-saving programme accomplishes two things: first, it takes the strain off the vision; and, secondly, it develops the desirable habit of using other senses to make up for the visual impairment. All attempts are made to educate these children and to save their vision at the same time. Until April, 1938, there were 571 sight-saving classes serving about 75,000 partially-sighted children.

Among the partially-sighted children, there are many who are very likely to lose their sight completely sooner or later. They usually suffer from high myopia, progressive diseases of the retina, and of the choroid, optic nerve atrophy, retinitis pigmentosa, albinism, and so on. These children are called "partially-blind," and provision for their education is made at residential institutions for the blind.

I shall conclude by referring to an experiment in the education of the blind in America. It has been realised that too much institutionalisation of blind children is very harmful to their future life and career. In large cities, sightless children are sent to ordinary schools to study side by side with their sighted brothers and sisters. In every school, there is a teacher who handles the peculiar problems of blind children, which ordinary class-room teachers are not able to solve. This special teacher is always the recipient of a degree or diploma in the education of the visually handicapped. There are at present about twenty-five day-classes for the blind in the United States, having about five hundred pupils on their rolls.

Under the existing economic conditions in our country, it seems to me that the introduction of such day-classes for the blind in ordinary schools in large cities and towns is highly desirable. Special institutions need plenty of funds to get started, whereas the appointment of one specially qualified teacher at a large school is all that is necessary to educate the blind children of a particular locality.

There are many other topics which I would like to discuss in connection with the education of visually handicapped persons. But my time is limited, and in the short time I had, I could not do better than compress the aforesaid points into their present form.

EDUCATION OF THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED *

A Course adopted at the Calcutta University for the purpose of training Teachers and Workers for the Visually Handicapped in India

Approved Syllabus

PART I

HISTORY AND SURVEY OF THE EDUCATION OF THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED

The Blind in ancient and medieval times—Early beginning of the education of the blind—Establishment of the first blind school in France—Spread of blind education in Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United States of America and Japan—Lives and contributions of illustrious instructors and workers (Louis Braille, William Moon, T. R. Armitage, Helen Keller, etc.)—Spread and growth of blind education in India.

PART II

PSYCHOLOGY OF THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED AND SPECIAL PROBLEMS IN THEIR EDUCATION

Native and acquired reactions of the visually handicapped—Training of the tactual, Kinaesthetic and auditory reactions—Adaptation of intelligence

* This course was introduced in July, 1940.

tests for use with blind children—Memory and aids to memory—Phenomena of retroactive inhibition and interference—Attention and interest—Means of winning attention and creating interest—Sense-perception—Perception of space—Theory of facial vision—Nature of imagery among the blind—Reconstructive and creative imagination—Methods of developing imagination among the visually handicapped—Emotional life of the blind—Dreams of the blind—Thinking process—Sex behaviour among the blind—Verbalism *versus* reality—Importance of voice and speech in blind life—Traits demanding special care for the visually handicapped—Complexes in blind life and ways of handling them—Nature and development of aesthetic appeal among the blind—Means of developing aesthetic appreciation—social adjustment Effects of institutional life on the blind—Personality integration—Public attitude towards the blind and its effects.

PART III

PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF THE EDUCATION OF THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED

Aims and functions of blind schools—Teaching aids and appliances for the blind—Tactual education to the coming of Braille—Invention and development of Braille—Growth and development of the Line Systems—Indian adaptations of Braille—Problems of securing Braille text-books in India—Library problems—Talking-books—Problems of illustrations for the blind—Special methods involved in instructing the visually handicapped—Problems of adminis-

tration, management and discipline—Physical education of the blind—Their recreations and amusements—Health of school children—Personal and school hygiene—Causes and prevention of blindness in India—Education of partially-sighted children—Education of the blind-deaf-mute—Education of the adult blind—Education of the mentally retarded blind—Hereditary blindness and the problem of marriage—Day-school *versus* residential institution for the blind—Special responsibility of teachers in respect of visually handicapped children—Higher education of the blind—Vocational guidance for the blind—Problems of the blind after school life—Questions of economic independence of the blind and their social absorption.

দৃষ্টিহীন বালকবালিকাগণ *

(১৯৪০ সালের ২৪শে ডিসেম্বর কলিকাতা বেতার কেন্দ্র হইতে প্রদত্ত বক্তৃতা)

প্রত্যেক দেশেই চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিদের তুলনায় দৃষ্টিহীনদের সংখ্যা অত্যন্ত নগণ্য। এক মিশরদেশ ছাড়া বোধ হয় আর কোথাও চক্ষুষ্মানদের তুলনায় অন্ধদের সংখ্যা শতকরা একজন নেই। এই জন্যই হিসিয়ড নামে এক গ্রীক পণ্ডিত মিশরকে অন্ধদের দেশ বলে আখ্যা দিয়েছিলেন। ভারতবর্ষে প্রতি লক্ষ দৃষ্টিমানের অনুপাতে অন্ধের সংখ্যা একশত বাহাত্তর। এই গণনা ১৯৩১ সালের আদামসুমারি থেকে নেওয়া হ'য়েছে এবং আমি পরে এ দেশে অন্ধদের যে সব সংখ্যা উল্লেখ ক'রব, সেগুলো এই আদমসুমারি অনুসারেই ধরা হবে।

* কলিকাতা বেতার কেন্দ্রের সৌজন্যে প্রকাশিত। এই বেতার বক্তৃতার কিয়দংশ ১৯৪১ সালের ৬ই জুন তারিখের যুগান্তরে প্রকাশিত হইয়াছিল।

গণনায় অন্ধদের এই স্বল্পতা সত্ত্বেও পাশ্চাত্ত্যের সকল দেশেই তাঁরা সমাজে একটি বিশেষ সম্মানের স্থান অধিকার ক'রতে পেরেছেন। এর একটা প্রধান কারণ এই যে, ও সব দেশের গভর্ণমেন্ট ও সর্ব্বসাধারণ অন্ধদের শিক্ষা-সম্বন্ধে খুব সচেতন এবং অন্ধ ব্যক্তিরা নিজেরাও উপযুক্ত শিক্ষা লাভ ক'রে জীবনে উন্নত হবার জন্য অত্যন্ত আগ্রহান্বিত। জন্ম থেকে বা খুব অল্প বয়সে দৃষ্টিশক্তি হারিয়েও রীতিমত শিক্ষা ও অপরিমিত অধ্যবসায়ের দরুন যাঁরা জগদ্বিখ্যাত হ'তে পেরেছেন, তাঁদের মধ্যে নিকোলাস সণ্ডার্সন, হেলেন কেলার প্রভৃতির নাম স্মরণীয়; আর যাঁরা অধিক বয়সে দৃষ্টিশক্তি হারিয়েও অবিরাম চেষ্টা এবং একনিষ্ঠতার ফলে অমর কীর্ত্তিরেখে যেতে পেরেছেন, তাঁদের মধ্যে মিল্টন, পুলিৎজার প্রভৃতি স্বনামধন্য ব্যক্তিরা উল্লেখযোগ্য। এই সব অল্পসংখ্যক প্রতিভাবান্ ব্যক্তিরাই যে শুধু ওসব দেশের অন্ধদের সামাজিক আসন উচু স্তরে তুলে ধ'রে রেখেছেন তা নয়, অন্যান্য হাজার হাজার দৃষ্টিহীন ব্যক্তিরাও শিক্ষা এবং সাধনার কল্যাণে স্ব স্ব জীবনে সাফল্য লাভ ক'রেছেন এবং জগতের কাছে প্রমাণ ক'রেছেন যে, শিক্ষার সুযোগ পেলে অন্ধ ব্যক্তিরাও অন্যদের মত কার্য্যক্ষম হ'তে পারে। শিক্ষা, ব্যবসায়, আইন, রাজনীতি, সংবাদপত্র, বেতার প্রভৃতি নানা বিভাগে বহু অন্ধ ব্যক্তি সুদক্ষ ভাবে কাজ ক'রে অর্থ উপার্জন ক'রছে এবং এই সব উদাহরণ চোখের সামনে অনবরত দেখছে ব'লেই ওসব দেশের চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিরা তাদের সম্মান ও শ্রদ্ধা ক'রে থাকেন।

কিন্তু আমাদের দেশে দৃষ্টিহীন ব্যক্তিদের অবস্থা সম্পূর্ণ বিভিন্ন। এ দেশে এদের শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা খুবই সঙ্কীর্ণ, এবং শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা এত অল্প ব'লেই জীবনে সাফল্য ও প্রতিষ্ঠা লাভ ক'রেছে এরকম অন্ধদের সংখ্যা এ দেশে খুবই বিরল। ঠিক সেই কারণেই আমাদের দেশের চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিরা যখনই কোনও অন্ধ লোকের কথা ভাবতে চেষ্টা করেন, তখনই তাঁদের মনে এক অসহায়, অশিক্ষিত, অন্ধ ভিখারীর ছবি ফুটে ওঠে। সাধারণতঃ তাঁরা ভাবতেই পারেন না যে, চক্ষুহীন ছেলেমেয়েরা উপযুক্ত শিক্ষা লাভ ক'রে স্বাভাবিক সক্ষম ব্যক্তিতে পরিণত হ'তে পারে এবং অন্যদের মত তারাও নিজেদের মানসিক ও শারীরিক পরিশ্রম দিয়ে সমাজকে উন্নত ও সমৃদ্ধ ক'রতে পারে। আমাদের দেশে অন্ধদের এমনই দুর্ভাগ্য যে, এই দুটো কারণ অনবরত পরস্পরের উপর আঘাত-প্রতিঘাত ক'রছে। চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিরা অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েদের ক্ষমতার উপর আস্থা স্থাপন ক'রতে পারছেন না ব'লে তাঁরা তাদের শিক্ষা ও উন্নতি সম্বন্ধে অত্যন্ত উদাসীন, এবং শিক্ষা ও উন্নতি লাভ ক'রবার সুযোগ না পেয়ে দৃষ্টিহীন ছেলেমেয়েরাও চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিদের কাছে নিজেদের ক্ষমতার পরিচয় দিতে

পারছে না এবং তাঁদের কাছ থেকে যথার্থ সহানুভূতি ও উপযুক্ত প্রেরণা থেকে বঞ্চিত হ'চেছ। আমি একথা ব'লছি না যে, আমাদের দেশে দৃষ্টিমান লোকদের অন্ধদের প্রতি কোনরকম অনুভূতিই নেই ; কিন্তু পরিতাপের বিষয় এই যে, তাঁদের মধ্যে সাধারণতঃ যে অনুভূতির পরিচয় পাওয়া যায়, সেটা অন্ধদিগকে শিক্ষিত ও সাফল্যমণ্ডিত সামাজিক ব্যক্তিতে পরিণত হ'তে সাহায্য করে না। " অন্ধজনে দয়া কর "—আমরা এই শিক্ষাই পেয়েছি এবং সেটা ভালভাবে পালন ক'রতে পারলেই আমরা খুসী। কিন্তু " অন্ধজনে শিক্ষা দাও," " অন্ধজনে কাজ দাও," এবং " অন্ধজনকে মানুষ মনে কর "—আমরা যে দিন এই উক্তি-গুলোর সত্যতা অনুভব ক'রতে পারব, সেই দিন থেকেই আমাদের দেশে অন্ধদের যথার্থ সেবা আরম্ভ হবে।

আগেই ব'লেছি, প্রত্যেক দেশে চক্ষুষ্মানদের তুলনায় দৃষ্টিহীনদের সংখ্যা অত্যন্ত অল্প। কিন্তু তুলনামূলক আলোচনা বাদ দিলে তাদের সংখ্যা একেবারেই নগণ্য নয়। পৃথিবীর অন্যান্য দেশ থেকে ভারতবর্ষে অন্ধদের সংখ্যা সকলের চেয়ে বেশী। এ দেশে চক্ষুহীনদের সংখ্যা ছয় লক্ষের কিছু উপরে এবং বাংলা প্রদেশে এদের সংখ্যা ৩৭,০০০ হাজারের কিছু বেশী। দুঃখের পরিমাণ এবং মানবশক্তির অপচয়ের দিক থেকে এই সংখ্যাগুলোর অর্থ ও ইঙ্গিত অত্যন্ত ভয়াবহ।

উল্লিখিত ছয় লক্ষ অন্ধ ব্যক্তিদের মধ্যে পাঁচ বৎসরের নিম্নবয়স্ক শিশুদের সংখ্যা প্রায় পনর হাজার এবং যারা বিদ্যালয়ে শিক্ষা পাবার উপযুক্ত, অর্থাৎ যাদের বয়স পাঁচ থেকে পনর বৎসরের মধ্যে, তাদের সংখ্যা প্রায় ৫০,০০০। অনুসন্ধান ক'রে যতটা জানা গিয়েছে তা থেকে বলা যেতে পারে যে, আমাদের দেশে পাঁচ বৎসরের নিম্নবয়স্ক ছেলেমেয়েদের জন্য কিণ্ডারগার্টেন অথবা সেইরকম অন্য কোনও শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা এখনও হয়নি। কিন্তু জীবনে সাফল্য লাভ করবার পক্ষে এই শিক্ষার যে কত প্রয়োজন সে সম্বন্ধে দুই একটি কথা কিছু পরে ব'লছি। ৫০,০০০ অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েরা, যারা বিদ্যালয়ে গিয়ে শিক্ষা লাভ ক'রতে পারে, তাদের মধ্যে এক হাজারের বেশী এ দেশে বিভিন্ন অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়ে প'ড়ছে না। যে দেশের দৃষ্টিহীন ছেলেমেয়েদের শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা এত সঙ্কীর্ণ সে দেশে তারাই বা কি ক'রে জীবনে উন্নতি ও প্রতিষ্ঠা লাভ ক'রতে পারে এবং দৃষ্টিমান ব্যক্তিরাই বা কি ক'রে তাদের ক্ষমতা ও যোগ্যতা সম্বন্ধে উচচ ধারণা পোষণ ক'রতে পারেন ?

বাংলা প্রদেশে পাঁচ বৎসরের নিম্নবয়স্ক অন্ধ শিশুদের সংখ্যা এক হাজারের কিছু উপরে। এই সব শিশুদের উপযুক্ত শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা অবিলম্বে করা উচিত।

সাধারণতঃ, কোনও পরিবারে একটি শিশু অন্ধ অবস্থায় জন্ম গ্রহণ ক'রলে অথবা শিশুটি পরে কোনও কারণে দৃষ্টিশক্তি থেকে বঞ্চিত হ'লে মাতাপিতা নিজেদের অত্যন্ত বিপদ্‌গ্রস্ত ও নিরুপায় অনুভব করেন। কিভাবে দৃষ্টিহীন শিশুটির রক্ষণাবেক্ষণ, সুখস্বাচ্ছন্দ্য ও শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা ক'রবেন সেই চিন্তা নিয়ে তাঁরা অত্যন্ত বিব্রত হ'য়ে পড়েন। কিন্তু তাঁরা তো অন্ধ শিশুদের শিক্ষা ও মনস্তত্ত্ব সম্বন্ধে কিছু জানেন না, কাজেই পরিবারে একটি অন্ধ শিশুর আগমনে যে সব অসংখ্য কঠোর প্রশ্ন এসে পড়ে সেগুলোর যথার্থ সমাধান তাঁরা ক'রবেন কি ক'রে? ফলে দৃষ্টিহীন শিশুটি মাতাপিতার গভীর ভালবাসা ও সহানুভূতির নিদর্শনস্বরূপ অত্যধিক আদর পেয়ে থাকে অথবা তাঁদের হতাশা এবং বিরক্তির দরুণ সম্পূর্ণভাবে অনাদৃত হয়। ইংলণ্ডের একটা ঘটনা এখানে উল্লেখযোগ্য। সেখানকার একটি পরিবারে দুটি শিশু ছিল—একটি চক্ষুষ্মান ও একটি দৃষ্টিহীন। মাতাপিতা যখন কোনও নিমন্ত্রণ বা উৎসবে যোগ দিতে যেতেন, তখন সঙ্গে থাকত চক্ষুষ্মান ছেলেটি। অন্ধ শিশুটিকে তাঁরা একটি খাটের সঙ্গে বেঁধে রেখে যেতেন, যাতে তাঁদের অনুপস্থিতিতে হঠাৎ কোনরকম ভাবে সে আঘাত না পায়।

বলা বাহুল্য যে, অত্যধিক আদর এবং অন্যায় অবহেলা—এই দুইই শিশু-মনোবৃত্তির স্বাভাবিক পরিণতির পথে অন্তরায়। অন্ধ শিশুর চক্ষুষ্মান ভাই-বোনদের সঙ্গে মাতাপিতা যেরকম ব্যবহার ক'রে থাকেন, তার সঙ্গেও ঠিক সেইরকম ব্যবহার করা উচিত; কেবল দৃষ্টিহীনতার জন্য যে সব নূতন পরিস্থিতির উদ্ভব হয়, সেইগুলো সমাধান করবার জন্য পৃথক ব্যবস্থা করা প্রয়োজন। কিন্তু এই পৃথক ব্যবস্থা কখন এবং কিরকমভাবে করা দরকার, সেটা বিচার ক'রবার মত শিক্ষা ও অভিজ্ঞতা কয়জন অভিভাবকের আছে?

তা ছাড়া, অন্ধ শিশুর শিক্ষা সম্বন্ধে আর একটি বিষয় বিশেষ ক'রে লক্ষ্য করা প্রয়োজন। দৃষ্টিমান শিশুদের মত এই সব শিশু অন্যদের আচারব্যবহার দেখে অনুকরণ ক'রতে অক্ষম। এইজন্য তাদের মধ্যে সাধারণতঃ অনেক রকম মুদ্রাদোষ দেখতে পাওয়া যায়, যাকে ইংরেজীতে বলে "Blindism" অনর্থক মাথা নাড়া, চোখের মধ্যে আঙ্গুল ঢুকিয়ে দেওয়া এবং অন্যান্য শারীরিক পরিচালনার মধ্য দিয়ে এই সব মুদ্রাদোষ প্রকাশ পায়। এই সব মুদ্রাদোষের প্রতি অতি শৈশবে শিশুর মনোযোগ আকর্ষণ করা দরকার এবং যত শীঘ্র এই গুলোর অবসান হয় তার ব্যবস্থা করা প্রয়োজন। তা না হ'লে এই সব অপ্রীতিকর অঙ্গচালনা সমস্ত জীবনব্যাপী স্থায়ী হ'য়ে যাবে। সকল মাতাপিতাই অন্ধ শিশুদের মধ্যে এই সব মুদ্রাদোষ লক্ষ্য ক'রে থাকেন, কিন্তু তাঁরা এগুলোর

যথার্থ তাৎপর্য্য বুঝতে না পেরে অবহেলা ক'রে যান, অথবা স্নেহ ও দয়ার বশীভূত হ'য়ে এগুলোর জন্য তাদের ব্যতিব্যস্ত ক'রতে অনিচ্ছা প্রকাশ করেন।

অন্ধ শিশুর জীবনে এসব ছাড়া আরও অনেক সমস্যা আছে। এই সব সমস্যার উপযুক্তভাবে সমাধান ক'রবার জন্য ইউরোপ ও আমেরিকায় "Sunshine Home" নামে অনেকগুলো প্রতিষ্ঠান স্থাপন করা হ'য়েছে। এই সব প্রতিষ্ঠানে কি প্রণালীতে কাজ করা হয় এবং এখানকার শিক্ষার ফলে দৃষ্টিহীন শিশুদের জীবনে কিরকম পরিবর্ত্তন ঘটে থাকে, আমার তা ব্যক্তিগতভাবে দেখবার সুযোগ হ'য়েছে। দেড় বা দুই বৎসর বয়স থেকে অন্ধ শিশুরা এখানে গৃহীত হয় এবং পাঁচ বা ছয় বৎসর পর্য্যন্ত তারা এখানে থেকে নানা রকম শিক্ষা লাভ করে। Essexএর একটি "Sunshine Home" দেখে যখন ফিরে আসি তখন কয়েকটী চার-পাঁচ বৎসরের ছেলেমেয়েরা সমস্বরে চিৎকার ক'রে আমাকে বলে, "আবার এসে আমাদের দেখে যাবেন। এখানে কত মজা আছে।" তাদের সেই সানন্দ ও উত্তেজিত কণ্ঠস্বর এখনও যেন আমার কাণে বাজে।

আমাদের দেশে এরকম একটা প্রতিষ্ঠানের খুব প্রয়োজন আছে।

আগেই বলা হ'য়েছে, যে-সব দৃষ্টিহীন ছেলেমেয়েরা বিদ্যালয়ে গিয়ে শিক্ষা লাভ ক'রতে পারে, অর্থাৎ যাদের বয়স পাঁচ থেকে পনর বৎসরের মধ্যে, ভারতবর্ষে তাদের সংখ্যা প্রায় ৫০,০০০। এই পঞ্চাশ হাজারের মধ্যে এক হাজারের বেশী ছেলেমেয়ে শিক্ষা লাভ ক'রবার সুযোগ পাচ্ছে না। বাংলা প্রদেশে এই শ্রেণীর অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েদের সংখ্যা প্রায় পাঁচ হাজার। এর মধ্যে এখানকার অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়ে যারা শিক্ষা লাভ করে তাদের সংখ্যা সাধারণতঃ আশী থেকে একশো জনের ভিতর। এই সব সংখ্যা দেখে অনায়াসে বুঝতে পারা যায় যে, উপযুক্ত এবং যথেষ্ট শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা না থাকায় আমাদের দেশে হাজার হাজার দৃষ্টিহীন ছেলেমেয়েরা শিক্ষা লাভ থেকে বঞ্চিত হ'চ্ছে।

এখানে আমি একটি বিতর্কের কথা উল্লেখ ক'রতে চাই। দুই এক জন লোক আমাকে প্রশ্ন ক'রেছেন যে, আমাদের দেশে কত লক্ষ লক্ষ চক্ষুষ্মান ছেলে-মেয়েরা শিক্ষালাভের সুযোগ পাচ্ছে না, সুতরাং আমি কয়েক হাজার অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েদের শিক্ষার জন্য এত উদ্বিগ্ন হ'য়ে প'ড়েছি কেন? এর উত্তরে আমি সাধারণতঃ ব'লে থাকি যে, লক্ষ লক্ষ ছেলেমেয়েদের শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা ক'রতে না পারা যে-কোনও সভ্য দেশের পক্ষে গভীর লজ্জার কারণ। কিন্তু নিম্ন-লিখিত কারণ দুটো থেকে স্পষ্টই প্রমাণিত হবে যে, দৃষ্টিহীনদের শিক্ষার প্রয়োজনীয়তা চক্ষুষ্মানদের চেয়ে কোন অংশেই অল্প নয়, বরং বেশী।

প্রথমতঃ, অন্ধ ব্যক্তিদের পক্ষে অর্থোপার্জনের উপায় অত্যন্ত সীমাবদ্ধ এবং যে কোনও বিভাগে অর্থোপার্জনের যোগ্যতা লাভ ক'রতে হ'লে তাদের অনেক বৎসরব্যাপী শিক্ষা ও সাধনার প্রয়োজন। কিন্তু চক্ষুষ্মান লোকদের পক্ষে অর্থোপার্জনের অনেক উপায় আছে, যার জন্য বিশেষ কোনও শিক্ষার প্রয়োজন নেই। শরীর ও মনের বৃত্তিগুলো স্বাভাবিক অবস্থায় থাকলে বিশেষ কোনও শিক্ষার অভাবেও তাঁরা ঐ সব কাজের যোগ্য ব'লে গণ্য হ'তে পারেন।

দ্বিতীয়তঃ, চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিরা স্বাধীনভাবে চলাফেরা ক'রতে পারেন এবং নানারকম কাজে লিপ্ত থেকে সময় কাটাতে পারেন। কিন্তু দৃষ্টিহীনদের সময় কাটে কি ক'রে? বাড়ীর বাইরে যেতে হ'লেই যে তাদের এক জন লোকের সাহায্যের প্রয়োজন। বলাই বাহুল্য যে; এরকম সাহায্য পাওয়া খুব কম অন্ধ ব্যক্তির পক্ষেই সহজসাধ্য। আর বাড়ীতে আবদ্ধ থেকেই বা কোনরূপ শিক্ষার অভাবে তারা সময় কাটাবে কি ক'রে? লেখাপড়া, গানবাজনা, অথবা কোনরকম হাতের কাজ শিখলে তারা তাই নিয়ে অনেকটা সময় আনন্দে কাটাতে পারে। জগদ্বিখ্যাত মহিলা হেলেন কেলার যথার্থই ব'লেছেন, "অন্ধদের জীবনে সব চেয়ে বড় দুঃখের কারণ অলসতা, দৃষ্টিহীনতা নয়।"

এই সব ছেলেমেয়েদের শিক্ষার বহুল প্রসার কি ভাবে হ'তে পারে এবং তাদের শিক্ষার উন্নতি সম্বন্ধে কি করা উচিত সে বিষয়ে আজ কেবল দুটো কথার আলোচনা ক'রব। সময় যথেষ্ট না থাকায় আলোচনা খুব সংক্ষিপ্ত হবে। আগে শিক্ষা বিস্তারের কথা বলি।

ভারতবর্ষে অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়ের সংখ্যা একুশটি বা বাইশটি এবং বাংলা প্রদেশে আছে মোটে একটি।* এ দেশের অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েদের সংখ্যা অনুসারে বিদ্যালয়ের সংখ্যা অত্যন্ত অল্প এবং সে জন্যই এত অধিক সংখ্যক শিক্ষার্থীরা শিক্ষার কোনও সুযোগ পাচেছ না। জাপানে স্কুলবয়সপ্রাপ্ত অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েদের সংখ্যা এখানকার তুলনায় প্রায় চার ভাগের এক ভাগ, অথচ সেখানে অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়ের সংখ্যা নব্বইটি, অর্থাৎ এখানকার সংখ্যা থেকে প্রায় চারগুণ বেশী। আমাদের দেশের বর্ত্তমান আর্থিক অবস্থার বিষয় চিন্তা ক'রলে নূতন একটি অন্ধ বিদ্যালয় কবে স্থাপিত হবে নিশ্চিত ক'রে তা বলা চলে না। কাজেই ইউরোপের বিভিন্ন দেশে এবং বিশেষ ক'রে আমেরিকায় এই শতাব্দির প্রথম থেকে দৃষ্টিহীন ছেলেমেয়েদের শিক্ষার যে নূতন ধারা প্রচলিত হ'য়েছে আমাদের অবিলম্বে সেই ধারা গ্রহণ

* ১৯৪১ সালে কোলকাতায় "নিখিল ভারত অন্ধ-আলোক-নিকেতন" নামে আর একটি অন্ধ বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠিত হ'য়েছে।

করা উচিত। সেটা হ'চ্ছে, দৃষ্টিমান ছেলেমেয়েদের বিদ্যালয়ে এবং তাদের সঙ্গে একই শ্রেণীতে অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েদের শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা করা। ও সব দেশে অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়ের সংখ্যা এখানকার চেয়ে দুই তিনগুণ বেশী; তথাপি চক্ষুষ্মান ও চক্ষুহীন ছেলেমেয়েদের এই সহশিক্ষা ও সব দেশে খব প্রসার লাভ ক'রেছে। বিশেষ লক্ষ্য করবার বিষয় এই যে, আমেরিকার এই সহশিক্ষার প্রস্তাব প্রথম যিনি করেন তিনি ঐ দেশের পার্কিন্‌স্ ইন্‌ষ্টিটিউশন নামে একটি সুপ্রসিদ্ধ অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়ের অধ্যক্ষ ছিলেন। Samuel Gridley Howe উক্ত বিদ্যালয়ের অধ্যক্ষ থাকা কালে ১৮৫১ সালে এইরূপ সহশিক্ষার প্রয়োজনীয়তা বর্ণনা করেন। এ থেকেই বুঝতে পারা যায় যে, তিনি নিজের বা নিজের বিদ্যালয়ের চেয়ে সমগ্র অন্ধজাতির কল্যাণকেই বড় ব'লে মনে ক'রতেন। উনিশ শ সালে সিকাগো সহরে প্রথম এইরূপ শিক্ষার প্রবর্ত্তন হয়। ১৯৩৩ সালের একটি বিবরণীতে উল্লেখ করা হ'য়েছে যে, আমেরিকার মোট একুশটি ষ্টেটে এইরূপ শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা করা হ'য়েছে এবং মোট ৪২৩টি অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়ে এই ব্যবস্থার সুযোগ গ্রহণ ক'রেছে। গত সাত বৎসরে এই সহশিক্ষা আরও অনেক প্রসার লাভ ক'রেছে। নিউ ইয়র্ক সহরে দুটি অন্ধ বিদ্যালয় থাকা সত্ত্বেও চক্ষুষ্মানদের চারটি বিদ্যালয়ে অন্ধদের শিক্ষা দেবার ব্যবস্থা করা হ'য়েছে।

এই সহশিক্ষার পথে বাধা খুবই অল্প। অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েরা চক্ষুষ্মান ছেলেমেয়েদের সঙ্গে একশ্রেণীতেই শিক্ষা লাভ করে। শিক্ষকদের মধ্যে একজন অন্ধশিক্ষা সম্বন্ধে অভিজ্ঞ থাকেন এবং অন্ধদের লিখবার, প'ড়বার এবং অঙ্ক ক'রবার বিশেষ পদ্ধতিগুলো তিনি দৃষ্টিহীন ছাত্রছাত্রীদের শিক্ষা দেন। অন্যান্য বিষয়গুলো তারা চক্ষুষ্মান ছেলেমেয়েদের সঙ্গেই শিক্ষা লাভ করে।

ইউরোপ ও আমেরিকার অনেক শিক্ষাভিজ্ঞ ব্যক্তি মনে করেন যে, অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়ে শিক্ষা লাভ করার চেয়ে এইরূপ সহশিক্ষাই দৃষ্টিহীন ছেলেমেয়েদের পক্ষে অধিকতর উপযোগী। এই মতবাদের সপক্ষে তাঁরা অনেক অকাট্য যুক্তির উল্লেখ ক'রেছেন। সময় অভাবে আমি মাত্র কয়েকটি প্রধান যুক্তি এখানে উদ্ধৃত ক'রছি:—

প্রথম, গভর্ণমেন্ট ও সর্ব্বসাধারণের অর্থ-সাহায্যে পরিচালিত বিদ্যালয়ে সমষ্টিগতভাবে বাস ক'রে অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েদের সাধারণতঃ এই ধারণা হ'য়ে যায় যে, সমাজ তাদের কাছে ঋণী এবং তাদের ভরণপোষণের ভার চিরকাল সমাজের গ্রহণ করা উচিত। এইরূপ চিন্তা ব্যক্তিগত চেষ্টা ও উৎসাহ দ্বারা জীবনে উন্নতি করার পক্ষে বিশেষ বাধা সৃষ্টি ক'রে থাকে। তা ছাড়া, দৃষ্টিহীন ছেলেমেয়েদের চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিদের থেকে বিচ্ছিন্ন ক'রে শুধু তাদের অঙ্গহীনতার

গণ্ডির মধ্যে রেখে দিলে তাদের মানসিক বৃত্তির ও সামাজিক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গীর যথার্থ বিকাশ হয় কিনা সন্দেহ। অনেক বৎসর সমাজ থেকে এইরকম বিচ্ছিন্ন অবস্থায় বাস ক'রে অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়ের শিক্ষার শেষে দৃষ্টিহীন ছেলেমেয়েরা যখন চক্ষুষ্মানদের সঙ্গে একতালে পা ফেলে চ'লতে বাধ্য হয়, তখন অনেক বিষয়েই তারা তাদের সঙ্গে নিজেদের খাপ খাওয়াতে পারে না। সহশিক্ষা এই ত্রুটিগুলো থেকে মুক্ত।

দ্বিতীয়, বৎসরের মধ্যে নয় মাস অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়ে বাস করার ফলে বাড়ী এবং বাড়ীর লোকদের প্রতি ছেলেমেয়েদের মনোভাবের পরিবর্ত্তন ঘটে। শুধু তাই নয়, মাতাপিতাও ভাবেন যে, তাদের অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েদের আর একজন অভিভাবক আছেন এবং সেজন্য তাঁরা সন্তানের প্রতি তাঁদের কর্ত্তব্য উপযুক্ত ভাবে পালন করেন না। তা ছাড়া, পরিবারের সঙ্গে বেশী দিন না থাকায় ছেলেমেয়েরা জীবনের অনেক প্রয়োজনীয় শিক্ষা থেকে বঞ্চিত হয়। আধুনিক মনোবিজ্ঞান অনুসারে ইনষ্টিটিউশন কখনও পরিবারের স্থান পূর্ণ ক'রতে পারে না। আমাদের প্রস্তাবিত সহশিক্ষায় বিদ্যালয় ও পরিবারের মধ্যে এইরূপ বিরুদ্ধ ভাবের প্রশ্ন ওঠে না।

তৃতীয়, মাতাপিতা ইনষ্টিটিউশনকে সাধারণতঃ সন্দেহের চোখে দেখেন এবং তাঁদের সন্তানদের সাধারণ বিদ্যালয়ে পাঠাতে ইচ্ছুক।

চতুর্থ, অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়ে বিচ্ছিন্নভাবে না থেকে ছেলেমেয়েরা যদি সাধারণ বিদ্যালয়ে শিক্ষা লাভ করে, তা হলে সর্ব্বসাধারণ অন্ধদের সমস্যা সম্বন্ধে বেশী তথ্য জানবার সুযোগ পান এবং সে সম্বন্ধে তাঁরা বেশী সচেতন থাকেন।

পঞ্চম, ইনষ্টিটিউসনের শিক্ষার চেয়ে সাধারণ বিদ্যালয়ে শিক্ষার ব্যয় অনেক অল্প। অন্যান্য ছেলেমেয়েদের মত স্থানীয় বিদ্যালয়ে দৃষ্টিহীন ছেলেমেয়েরা যদি শিক্ষা লাভ ক'রতে পারে, তাহ'লে অনেক মাতাপিতাই অল্প খরচে তাঁদের অন্ধ সন্তানদের শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা ক'রতে পারেন।

আমাদের দেশে অবিলম্বে এইরূপ শিক্ষার প্রবর্ত্তন না ক'রলে হাজার হাজার অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েরা কখনই শিক্ষালাভের সুযোগ পাবে না।

এইবার শিক্ষার উন্নতি কি ক'রে হ'তে পারে সেই কথাটি ব'লে আজ আমার বক্তব্য শেষ ক'রব। আমাদের সাধারণ ধারণা এই যে, অন্ধদের শিক্ষার ভার যাঁরা গ্রহণ ক'রবেন তাঁদের বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের কোনও উচ্চ শিক্ষা অথবা অন্ধশিক্ষা সম্বন্ধে বিশেষ কোনও অভিজ্ঞতার প্রয়োজন নেই। কিন্তু এ ধারণা সম্পূর্ণ ভুল। প্রায় দুই শত বৎসরব্যাপী চেষ্টা ও গবেষণার ফলে অন্ধদের মনোবিজ্ঞান ওশিক্ষাপদ্ধতি সম্বন্ধে এত জটিল তথ্যের আবিষ্কার হ'য়েছে যে, বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের

উচচ শিক্ষা এবং অন্ধশিক্ষা সম্বন্ধে বিশেষ অভিজ্ঞতা,—এই দুইই না থাকলে কেউই অন্ধদের যথার্থ শিক্ষক বা পরিচালক হ'তে পারেন না। আমাদের দেশে অন্ধদের শিক্ষা এতটা পিছিয়ে থাকবার একটা প্রধান কারণ এই যে, আমাদের অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়গুলিতে শিক্ষক ও পরিচালকদের মধ্যে উল্লিখিত দুইটি শিক্ষার সমাবেশ খুব কম ক্ষেত্রেই দেখতে পাওয়া যায়।

ইউরোপ ও আমেরিকায় যাঁরা অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়ে উচচ পদে অধিষ্ঠিত থাকেন, তাঁরা প্রায় সকলেই বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের উচচ শিক্ষাপ্রাপ্ত। তাঁদের মধ্যে অনেকেই **Ph.D.** ডিগ্রি পর্য্যন্ত লাভ ক'রেছেন। শুধু তাই নয়, শিক্ষক ও পরিচালকেরা যাতে অন্ধশিক্ষা সম্বন্ধে বিশেষ জ্ঞান ও অভিজ্ঞতা লাভ ক'রতে পারেন সেই উদ্দেশ্যে আমেরিকায় কলম্বিয়া ও হার্ভার্ড প্রভৃতি ছয়টি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে অন্ধশিক্ষা সম্বন্ধে বিশেষ ব্যবস্থা করা হ'য়েছে। গ্রেট ব্রিটেনেও দুইটি স্থানে এইরূপ শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা আছে। গ্রেট ব্রিটেন ও আমেরিকায় এই বিশেষ শিক্ষা অর্জন ক'রতে না পারলে অন্ধদের শিক্ষকের পদ পাওয়া কঠিন।

সৌভাগ্যের বিষয় এই যে, এই বৎসর থেকে কোলকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে অন্ধশিক্ষার একটি বিশেষ ব্যবস্থা করা হ'য়েছে। ভারতবর্ষে আর কোনও বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে এরূপ শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা নেই। যে চল্লিশটি ছাত্রছাত্রী এই বিশেষ শিক্ষা লাভ ক'রছে তারাই আমাদের দেশে চক্ষুষ্মান ও দৃষ্টিহীনদের সহশিক্ষার প্রথম পরিচালক হবে।

আজ শুধু দৃষ্টিহীন ছেলেমেয়েদের কথা ব'ল্লাম। যাঁরা অধিক বয়সে দৃষ্টিশক্তি হারিয়ে জীবনকে একটি দুর্ব্বহ বোঝা ব'লে মনে করেন, তাঁদের শিক্ষা ও সমস্যার কথা আগামী বক্তৃতায় ব'লবার ইচছা রইল।

দৃষ্টিহীনদের সংখ্যা-গণনা *

(একখানি চিঠি)

১৯৩১ সনের আদমসুমারী হইতে জানা যায় যে, সমস্ত ভারতে দৃষ্টিহীনদের সংখ্যা ছয় লক্ষের কিছু বেশী এবং বঙ্গদেশে তাহাদের সংখ্যা ৩৭ হাজারের

* ১৯৪১ সালের ১লা ফেব্রুয়ারীর আনন্দ বাজার পত্রিকায় প্রকাশিত।

উপরে। কিন্তু অন্ধত্ব নিবারণ কার্য্যে ব্যাপৃত কর্ম্মিগণ মনে করেন যে, আদম-সুমারীর এই সংখ্যা অন্ধদের প্রকৃত সংখ্যা অপেক্ষা অনেক কম।

গত ফেব্রুয়ারী মাসে মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র হইতে কলিকাতায় ফিরিয়া আসিয়া আমি এ দেশের অন্ধদের সঠিক সংখ্যা নির্ণয়ের প্রয়োজনীয়তার প্রতি দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণের চেষ্টা করিয়াছিলাম। এদেশের দৃষ্টিহীনদের শোচনীয় অনগ্রসরতা এবং দুরবস্থার বিষয় সকলে নিশ্চয়ই সবিশেষ অবগত আছেন। আধুনিক বৈজ্ঞানিক প্রণালীতে তাহাদের মধ্যে শিক্ষা বিস্তার এবং অন্যান্য কল্যাণকর কার্য্যাবলী প্রবর্ত্তন করিতে হইলে নির্ভুলভাবে সংখ্যা নিরূপণ করিতে হইবে।

কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার আমাকে জানাইলেন যে, দৃষ্টিহীন এবং অন্যান্য অঙ্গহীন ব্যক্তিদের সংখ্যা নির্ভুলভাবে গণনা করা অতিশয় দুষ্কর বলিয়া তাহাদের সংখ্যা গণনা করা হইবে না। আমি তখন প্রাদেশিক গভর্ণমেন্টের নিকট বাঙলা দেশের অন্ধদের সংখ্যা নির্দ্ধারণের জন্য অনুরোধ জানাইয়াছিলাম এবং এজন্য কর্ত্তৃপক্ষের সহিত দেখা-সাক্ষাৎও করিয়াছিলাম। মনে হইতেছে যে, অন্ধদের সংখ্যা-নির্দ্ধারণের ব্যবস্থা বেশী ব্যয়সাপেক্ষ না হইলেও বাঙ্গলা সরকার আমার প্রস্তাব গ্রহণ করিতে ইতস্ততঃ করিতেছেন? এস্থলে উল্লেখ করা যাইতে পারে যে, অন্যান্য সমস্ত অঙ্গহীনদের তুলনায় দৃষ্টিহীনদের সংখ্যা নির্দ্ধারণ করা অপেক্ষাকৃত সহজসাধ্য। সুতরাং গণনাকরীদের পক্ষে অঙ্গহীন ব্যক্তিদের সংখ্যা নির্ণয় করা শক্ত, এই যুক্তি অন্ধদের সম্বন্ধে খাটে না। পাগল, এমন কি বধির ঠিক করা কঠিন হইতে পারে, কিন্তু অন্ধত্ব সম্বন্ধে কোন গোলযোগই উঠিতে পারে না।

আমি আপনার বহুল প্রচারিত পত্রিকার মারফৎ আবার গভর্ণমেন্ট এবং জনসাধারণকে এই বিষয়ে অবহিত এবং সচেষ্ট হইয়া বহু উপেক্ষিত দৃষ্টিহীনদের সাহায্য করিতে অনুরোধ জানাইতেছি।

CENSUS OF BLINDNESS *

(A Letter)

According to the Census Report of 1931, the number of blind persons in India is a little over

* Published in the *Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta, 7th February, 1941.

600,000, and in Bengal, their number is over 37,000. But, those who have worked in connection with programmes for the prevention of blindness, have come to realise that these figures have been very much underestimated.

On my return to Calcutta from the United States last February, I tried my best to impress upon the Government of India the great need of recording accurate statistics of blind individuals in this country. In view of the extremely backward and miserable conditions of the blind in India, the correct census is indispensable to the inauguration and continuation of educational and other welfare activities for them on modern scientific lines.

I was, however, told by the Central Government that the census of blind persons as well as of those having other physical handicaps, would not be taken on the ground that it is very difficult to secure accurate figures of them. I, then, appealed to our Provincial Government to take the census of blindness in Bengal and I interviewed the proper authorities for this purpose. It seems that the Bengal Government is hesitating to adopt this measure, although it will not incur much expense.

The particulars regarding age, sex, religion and education of every individual, sighted or blind, will be recorded in every case. Now, if on another slip, one additional question be allowed to be asked as to how many persons belonging to a family or other units, are blind, and if a comparable link between this additional slip and that recording the age, sex, etc., of every individual, is established, the census of the blind of this province will be an accomplished

fact without much expense and trouble to the Government.

It may be stated here that, among all physically handicapped groups, blind persons are the easiest to be spotted out and recorded. The argument, therefore, that there should not be any census of physically handicapped persons on the ground that it is very hard for the enumerators to determine the application to cases of blindness. It may be diffi-
physical handicap of these persons, has very little
cult for one to be sure as to whether a person is insane or even deaf, but there cannot be any dispute regarding his blindness.

I, again, appeal to our Government and the public to take an interest in this matter and, thus, help the much-neglected cause of the blind.

EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS OF BLIND CHILDREN *

(Speech delivered at the Rotary Club, Calcutta, on the 11th February, 1941, under the Chairmanship of the President of the Club.)

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

My first and most obvious duty is to extend my sincere thanks to the Rotary Club for giving me this

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opportunity to say a few words on the "Educational Problems of Blind Children in India, with particular reference to those in Bengal." The expression "A few words" has been used advisedly; because the subject of my talk involves and implies problems of such variety and complexity that it is impossible for me to touch them, much less to discuss them within the time at my disposal. I have, therefore, selected three main problems for discussion, and I hope that the hurried way in which I shall have to dispose of them, may not affect the vital points of my discourse.

According to the Census Report of 1931, the number of blind persons in India is a little over 600,000. This represents the largest incidence of blindness recorded in any country, although those working in connection with programmes for the prevention of blindness, think that the statistics of the sightless individuals in this country is much higher than what has been stated in the 1931 Census Report. In the said Census Report, the number of blind persons in Bengal is stated to be over 37,000. What has already been remarked about the all-India statistics of the blind applies with equal force to the number of the blind in this province.

There is, thus, an urgent need of recording accurate statistics of the blind in this country. In Great Britain and America, there are provisions for taking special census of the blind, and every effort is made to secure correct figures. The Government of India have, however, decided not to include statistics of the blind and other physically handicapped persons in the forthcoming Census Report. The alleged reason for this decision is that it is very difficult for

the enumerators to secure correct and adequate information about these afflicted persons. On return from my European and American tours last year, I appealed to the Central Government and the Government of Bengal to take the census of the blind, and, as an incorrigible optimist, I still hope that my appeal will not go in vain.

The number of sightless boys and girls, to whose educational problems I shall confine my discussion to-day, is about 50,000 in India, and about 5,000 in this province. They are between the ages of 5 and 15. There are about 22 or 23 blind institutions in this country where about 1,000 blind boys and girls are receiving education. In other words. about 49,000 blind children are being deprived of the blessing of education owing to the lack of facilities. In Bengal, provision for accommodation of about 200 blind children has been made in the local blind school, which is the only one of its kind in this province. Due to the deplorable financial conditions of the parents and guardians of blind children, the total enrolment at this school does not usually exceed 100 boys and girls. How shall we meet the educational needs of the rest of the blind children in this province?

A question may be asked at this stage of our discussion: There are so many millions of sighted children in this country who are going without education; why should I, then, raise an issue about the lack of educational opportunities for a few thousand children without sight? To this my answer is that it is highly regrettable for any country not to be able to make any provision for the education of so many millions of her children. However, I be-

lieve that sightless children have a more urgent need of education than even the seeing. There are mainly two reasons in support of this belief:

First, the blind persons cannot be employed in any work without receiving a systematic training and education extending over several years, while there are various spheres of activity for the seeing individuals, in which they may be employed without such protracted training and education. In these activities, the mere possession of sight, combined with some amount of common sense, is all that is needed to qualify a person for employment.

Secondly, the seeing people are able to move freely and have several interests to keep themselves busy with. But the sightless individuals have to carry on a dreary and monotonous existence and have a feeling of hopelessness and aloneness in the world if they are not taught some art or craft, which will keep them occupied and make them feel that time, after all, moves. Helen Keller, the world-famous blind-deaf-mute scholar, has rightly remarked, "The heaviest burden on the blind is not blindness, but idleness."

Our first problem, then, is how to extend facilities for the education of our blind children. This can easily be done if we adopt the new educational philosophy and practice that has been current in different countries of Europe and America since the beginning of the present century. This consists of the introduction of the education of the blind in schools for the seeing.

We usually believe that a special residential institution is the only place where blind children can

be educated. This was also the belief in Europe and America about half a century ago. But most of the present educators of the blind in those countries hold that it is better for blind children to be educated with their seeing compatriots in ordinary schools than in special institutions where their association is confined only to those having the similar physical handicap.

Admitting for the sake of argument that residential institutions are better suited to the needs of sightless children, we shall have to have a good deal of funds for the purpose of establishing new institutions throughout the country. It is, however, apparent to all of us here that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to collect necessary funds to build institutions sufficient to meet the demands of 50,000 blind children.

The day-school for the blind does not, however, invovle much expense to the parents and guardians of children without sight. Blind boys and girls attend the ordinary schools of their locality with their sighted brothers and sisters and pay the same tuition fee. They receive lessons in the same class with other pupils. On the teaching staff, there is one who is specially trained in the education and psychology of the blind. He spends some time every day with the blind children of his school and helps them in their peculiar difficulties. Otherwise, there is no distinction between blind and seeing children in an ordinary school.

Apart from a few isolated instances of some blind pupils having successfully prosecuted their studies with their seeing classmates in ordinary

schools, the idea of this kind of co-education is rather an innovation in the educational philosophy in our country. In the Western countries, however, specially in the United States of America, this idea was, as stated before, carried into practice about half a century ago. As early as 1851, Samuel Gridley Howe, the first Director of the Perkins Institution for the Blind, one of the three leading blind schools in the United States, stressed the various advantages derivable from the co-education of blind and sighted children in ordinary schools. Since the execution of this idea in actual practice in 1900, this movement in America has become so popular among the parents and guardians of visually handicapped children and among the children themselves that, according to an educational survey in 1936, there were more blind and partially-sighted boys and girls studying in ordinary schools than those enrolled at residential institutions for the blind—the recorded number being 7,251 in ordinary schools and 5,851 in special institutions. A particular note should be taken of the fact that, although the first residential school for the blind in America was established 68 years before this amalgamated education took a practical shape, yet, in course of only 36 years, ordinary seeing schools served the educational needs of a larger number of visually handicapped boys and girls than the institutions for the blind, of which there are over 60 in the United States! In the New York city, four schools for the seeing have introduced the education of the blind in spite of the existence of two residential institutions for the blind in that city.

There must be very good reasons for the phenomenal growth of this particular variety of co-educa-

tion in America. In view of the short time at my disposal, I shall mention only six of these reasons:

1. " The principle of the day-school is nothing but the manifestation of the scientific conviction, found in evidence in more than one field of education and of child welfare to-day, that institutional life for children should be reduced to its lowest possible limits. It results from a general belief that the institution is more or less out of place in modern conceptions of the treatment of the child, and is to be acceped only in the absence of anything better." Frank H. Hall, one of the most notable educationists of the blind in America, believed firmly that " The institutionalisation of blind children constitutes a handicap in later life even more serious than the lack of vision." As a result of this institutionalisation, a blind child is made to feel dependent upon the rest of the society and is led to believe that the world owes him a living. Such an attitude chills personal efforts and ambitions; and causes blindness to be associated with social parasitism in the minds of the seeing people. Besides, living constantly with children similarly afflicted, blind children, in many cases, cannot develop normal personalities. At the end of this segregation from society for several years, they find it very difficult to adjust themselves psychologically to the seeing world. The proposed co-education is free from these shortcomings.

2. The parents and guardians are more familiar with ordinary schools than with special institutions, and they prefer to send their blind children to the seeing schools. Special institutions are usually looked upon with suspicion by them.

3. According to the modern principles of educational psychology, an institution can never take the place of home. Due to the long residence in a special institution, a blind child's attitude towards home and the members of his family undergoes a considerable change The parents themselves come to think in course of time that there is another agency to take care of their blind child, and, thus, do not discharge their parental obligations to the extent they should. The home contacts give the blind child an appreciative understanding of their economic problems of the home and urge him to make an effort towards self-support.

4. The standard of education in special institutions is very often inferior to that obtainable in ordinary seeing schools. Dr. Merry, one of the American authorities on blind education, has rightly remarked:

"It should be pointed out that on the whole day-school classes for blind children are not so prone to adhere to outworn theories and methods as are residential institutions. The fact that these classes are recognised part of the public school systems of cities where they are located, tends to bring them in line with the best current educational practices for seeing children."

5. If the blind children attend ordinary schools, the seeing people get a better opportunity to be conversant with the needs and problems arising out of the deprivation of vision. Besides, the sighted and the sightless children learn to understand each other from their early association in their school life, and the question of superiority or inferiority complex can hardly arise.

6. Lastly, the maintenance cost in a day-school is about 50% less than in a special institution. Having regard to our present economic conditions, this financial argument should be most telling. The parents and guardians are usually too poor to send their sightless children and wards to the existing institutions situated far away from their homes and to meet the expenses necessary for education in residential schools. Why cannot these children stay in their own homes and receive education in the ordinary schools of their locality? Of course, they can and this is the only way in which this perplexing educational problem of so many thousands of sightless boys and girls in our province as well as in the rest of India can be solved without much expense to parents and guardians.

After we have discussed the problem as to where blind children should be educated, we are confronted with our second problem, *viz.*, who is fit to educate them? We, in India, are under the impression that the teachers and workers for the blind do not need a good University education and a training in the special methods and techniques in the education of the visually handicapped. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The education of the visually handicapped has become such a technical and a growing subject that no one can be expected to render efficient service without a systematic training in this specialised field. A good University education is also indispensable to the leadership in the realm of blind education. One of the causes of the extreme backwardness of the education of the blind in our country is the absence of these two qualifications among most of our teachers and workers.

The picture is completely different in Europe and America. The leaders of blind education in the Western countries are usually in possession of high academic education, including the highest degrees of the University. Without this, they feel that they cannot do justice to the intricate problems of blind education and psychology. On the other hand, adequate arrangements have been made to provide technical education to the intending teachers and workers for the blind. There are three centres in Great Britain and at least six Universities in the United States, including the famous Columbia and Harvard Universities, where regular courses are given for the purpose of providing specialised knowledge and experience in the realm of blind education.

The Calcutta University has inaugurated such a course of education at its Teachers' Training Department from the commencement of the present academic session. This is the first time in the educational history of this country that a University has incorporated a subject of this nature into its curriculum. There are, at present, 40 students taking this course, and they will be the pioneers to guide the education of blind children in seeing schools.

We, now, come to the printing and library problems in the education of blind children, our third and last topic for to-day's discussion. The success of literary education of the blind is dependent to a large extent on the availability of a sufficient quantity of reading matter in Braille. It is very expensive to purchase Braille books and periodicals from abroad. Besides, it is not ordinarily possible to get Braille literature in the Indian languages from

other countries. Under these circumstances, the only possible solution of the problem of having an adequate number of books and journals in Braille is to install a Braille printing press. To have a press is, in the long run, much cheaper than buying books from abroad. The need of such a press has been keenly felt for a long time by the workers and instructors of the blind in this country. It is a matter of deep regret that the boys and girls of blind schools in India have to continue the hard task of embossing their text-books with their own hands. This practice involves a great hardship and a huge waste of time on the part of these school children. Reading and writing Braille is a much more slow and tedious process than ordinary reading and writing, and the education of these children is, thus, slow and unpleasant for having to transcribe their own books. If we have a Braille printing press of our own and print the books for the use of blind schools in India, the task of educating blind children will be much more pleasant and efficient than what it used to be and has been up till now.

I may state that all the large organisations for the blind in the countries I visited, have Braille printing presses for embossing books and journals for those who need them. The National Library for the Blind, London, has about half a million Braille books which it lends out free to all who ask for them. The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., and the Public Library for the Blind in New York, have a still larger number of books for the free use of the blind. The Federal Government of the United States donates 225,000 dollars per annum to the American Printing House for the Blind for the purpose of em-

bossing text-books for school and college students as well as books of general interests. In addition, there are about four scores of journals published in the English Braille. In England and America, there are weekly journals in Braille, and I saw in Japan a daily newspaper printed in the embossed character.

There should be a Braille printing press at some central organisation in our country, and books and journals should be printed for the use of the blind, both children and adults.

I thank you, again, ladies and gentlemen, for giving me this opportunity to speak to you and for your patient hearing. I shall be very glad to answer your questions in connection with my speech, that you may be pleased to ask. Thank you.

THE BLIND TO BE TAUGHT WITH THE SEEING*

(A LETTER)

My attention has recently been drawn to a report published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of the 25th December, 1940, regarding the training of teachers and workers for visually handicapped persons, carried on at the Calcutta University. One

* Published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 13th February, 1941. A very favourable notice of this letter was taken editorially by the same paper on the 14th February, 1941.

statement in the report is a little misleading, and I should like to correct and explain it in the interest of the particular department of our University, which has taken such an important step in the education of the sightless boys and girls of our province.

The statement in question runs thus:

> "After about a month's labour, 50 instruments have been manufactured under the supervision of the Head of the Department, Dr. P. N. Ghose, for those who are now being trained as teachers for blind schools by the blind scholar, Mr. S. C. Roy, at the Teachers' Training Department of the University."

There is not the slightest doubt that many of those who are and will be receiving this special training at the Calcutta University, will be employed in different blind institutions of our country, since ours is the only University in India which has inaugurated this kind of training programme. The scope of this training programme is, however, much wider than mere supplying teachers for the existing blind schools of our country. We are trying to popularise the education of blind children in schools for the seeing, and the majority of these specially trained teachers will be in demand in order to meet the peculiar problems of blind children in seeing schools.

Apart from a few isolated instances of some blind pupils having successfully prosecuted their studies with their seeing compatriots in ordinary schools, the idea of this kind of co-education is rather an innovation in the educational philosophy in our country. In the Western countries, however, spe-

cially in the United States of America, this idea was carried into practice about half a century ago. As early as 1851, Samuel Gridley Howe, the first Director of the Perkin's Institution for the Blind, one of the three leading blind schools in the United States, stressed the various advantages derivable from the co-education of blind and sighted children in ordinary schools. Since the execution of this idea in actual practice in 1900, this movement in America has become so popular among the parents and guardians of visually handicapped children and among the children themselves that, according to an educational survey in 1936, there were more blind and partially-sighted boys and girls studying in ordinary schools than those enrolled at residential institutions for the blind—the recorded number being 7,251 in ordinary schools, and 5,851 in special institutions. A particular note should be taken of the fact that, although the first residential school for the blind in America was established 68 years before this amalgamated education took a practical shape, yet, in course of only 36 years, the ordinary seeing schools served the educational needs of a larger number of sightless and partially-sighted boys and girls than the institutions for the blind, of which there are over 60 in the United States.

There must be very good reasons for the phenomenal growth of this particular variety of co-education in America. Owing to several reasons,—social, psychological, financial, etc., into which I cannot enter here, most of the experts on blind education believe that " The institutionalization of blind children constitutes a handicap in later life—even more serious than lack of vision."

India affords an excellent opportunity for this co-education. According to the Census Report of 1931, there are, in our country, about 50,000 blind boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 15. There are about 23 residential institutions which are trying to take care of the educational needs of such a huge number!

In Bengal, there are about 5,000 blind boys and girls of school-going age, and there is only one blind school which cannot accommodate more than 200 pupils at the most. How will the rest of the blind children receive the blessing of education? The answer is, they should be educated with their sighted brothers and sisters in ordinary schools.

Leaving social, psychological and other reasons out of consideration, just the financial reason is strong enough for the purpose of introducing the education of blind children in ordinary seeing schools. We have hardly any funds for building new institutions for the blind, and the parents and guardians are usually too poor to send their sightless children and wards to the existing institutions situated far away from their homes and to meet the expenses necessary for education in a residential school. Why cannot these children stay in their own homes and receive education in the ordinary schools of their locality? Of course, they can, and this is the only way in which the educational problems of so many thousands of sightless boys and girls in our province as well as in the rest of India can be solved without much expense to parents and guardians.

I shall always be very glad and willing to discuss details of how this co-education may

work satisfactorily, with anyone interested in the matter. We may not be able to restore physical light to sightless eyes, but we can certainly provide inner light and happiness to blind boys and girls, in spite of their lack of vision, through education and work. Shall we?

LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND IN INDIA *

(Outline of a scheme circulated among the members of this new institution and placed before them at their inaugural meeting, held at the Calcutta University on the 3rd April, 1941, under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. P. Mookerjee).

In view of the extremely deplorable conditions of the blind in our province as well as of those in the rest of our country, I am very anxious to introduce some items of welfare work which will ameliorate their lot to a considerable extent. Although the number of blind persons in Bengal was, according to the Census Report of 1931, a little over 37,000 and that of India, over 600,000, yet the important measures which I shall mention very briefly in the following pages, have, unfortunately, not been attempted anywhere in this country.

Through the generosity of the University of Calcutta and, later, of the Government

* Published in the *Statesman*, Calcutta, 5th April, 1941; *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, *Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta, and *Jugantar*, Calcutta (all on the 6th April, 1941).

of Bengal, I had the opportunity of studying the problems of blindness and of the blind in all their aspects in different countries of Europe, in America, and Japan, and I feel that it is both my duty and privilege to better the existing conditions of my fellow-sufferers in this country by applying the up-to-date methods employed in the education and welfare work for the blind abroad. In order to fulfil this mission, I need the co-operation and financial support of both the public and Government.

An organisation, which may provisionally be called, *Lighthouse for the Blind*, should be established in Calcutta under the supervision and direction of a Committee of Management. This Committe will be composed of people selected from among the different communities in Bengal.

Lighthouses for the Blind exist and are flourishing in almost every country of Europe, America, and Japan. *The Lighthouse in Japan was established by Mr. Takeo Iwahashi, an educated blind gentleman, who is also the director of the said organisation.* There is no such organisation in India, and Bengal will set a noble example by helping to found the first Lighthouse for the Blind in our country.

The proposed Lighthouse for the Blind will deal with the following activities:

I. *Education and Training of the Adult Blind*

The lot of the blind adults of our country is very pitiable indeed. Although they constitute over 80 per cent. of the total number of blind persons in almost every province, yet practically nothing has so far been done to ame-

liorate their conditions and remove the depressing monotony of their lives through education and employment. Generally, the blind adults in India just remain at home, if they have any, and spend their days lamenting over their physical handicap, blaming God and society.

In the Western countries, however, the picture is completely different. Through the co-operation of the Government and public, light-houses and other centres have been established where the adult blind receive education and training in accordance with their individual needs. Most of the employable blind adults have been given suitable employments by means of which they have become completely or partially self-supporting. The County Councils in Great Britain have opened special departments, sponsoring programmes of training and employment for the adult blind in their particular areas. In almost every State of the United States of America, there is a Government department, known as the *State Commission for the Blind*, which deals with the needs and problems of the adult blind in that State. In both these countries, pensions have been introduced and Homes established for those blind adults who are found to be definitely unemployable. According to a Law, recently enacted by the British Parliament, a blind adult is to be pensioned off at the age of 40, while a sighted person is not entitled to his pension before he is 65.

The above brief sketch of what is being done for the blind adult in Great Britain and the United States of America, where their number is so very much less than the number of the adult blind in

India, is an adequate commentary of what should be done for the blind adults in our country.

Roughly speaking, the term "adult blind" includes blind persons who are 16 years of age and over. It comprises two distinct groups of people having different psychological and social problems, *viz.*, those who lost their sight from birth or during the early years of their lives, and those who became blind in later years.

According to the Census Report of 1931, there were, in Bengal, about 33,000 blind persons above the age of 16 out of a total of about 37,000 blind persons, belonging to all age levels. In other words, more than 80% of blind individuals in this province are adult. This ratio of the adult blind to the total of blind persons holds good with slight variations in almost every other province in India.

Although some provision, however inadequate it may be, has been made for the education and training of blind boys and girls of school-going age in all provinces except a few, yet, as stated before, practically nothing has been done for the adult blind who form such a huge majority of the sightless community in every province. It can be easily imagined *how blank, empty, and dependent the life of a person becomes, who has the misfortune of losing his eye-sight in his adulthood.* After this catastrophe, he has to face not only the psychological problems of adjusting himself to his family, friends, and relatives, but also the problems of earning his livelihood and lessening the burden of his life by keeping himself occupied with some sort of activity. In our country, there is no arrangement of imparting training to these unfortunate individuals, which will

make them fit for some productive work. *As a result, they either swell the number of beggars or become hopeless and contemptible dependents on their relatives and friends.*

In my opinion, the blind people have a more urgent need for education than even the seeing. There are mainly two reasons in support of this opinion:

First, the blind persons cannot be employed in any work without receiving a systematic training and education extending over several years, while there are various spheres of activity for the seeing individuals in which they may be employed without such protracted training and education. In those activities, the mere possession of sight, combined with some amount of commonsense, is all that is needed to qualify a person for employment.

Secondly, the seeing people are able to move about freely and have several interests to keep themselves busy with. But the sightless individuals have to carry on a dreary and monotonous existence and have a feeling of hopelessness and aloneness in the world if they are not taught some art or craft which will keep them occupied and make them feel that time, after all, moves.

At the proposed Lighthouse, I shall make arrangements to teach Braille and provide literary, industrial, and musical education for the blind adults in this province as well as for those from other provinces, who would care to take advantage of these facilities.

The type of education will have to be adjusted to the needs of individual cases, and this training will help them to be contributing members of society.

I shall now close this particular discussion by referring to the education and training of a very important group of blind adults. These are the persons who have been or will be deprived of their eye-sight in war. Every war is responsible for a large volume of blindness, and the persons losing their sight have serious problems of training and employment facing them when they return from the battle-field. To solve these problems, Sir Arthur Pearson, himself blind, founded St. Dunstan's in London. At present, branches of this organisation have been established all over the British Empire except in India.* I had the privilege of meeting Sir Ian Fraser, a blind ex-member of the House of Commons, and the present Chairman of St. Dunstan's in London, and of discussing with him the problems of war-blinded soldiers tackled by his organisation. I also had the opportunity of studying the work done by the Lighthouse at Paris on behalf of war-blinded civilians.

India has its own problems in this connection, and the Lighthouse in question can very well take care of them. *It is only right and proper that the people who have lost and will lose their eye-sight for the defence of their country, should be given an opportunity to be happy and respectable members of society through education and employment.*

* See the second foot-note to the speech entitled, "How the Blind can help War efforts and how we can help the War-blinded," included elsewhere in this book, in which the information about the establishment of St. Dunstan's in India in July, 1943, has been stated.

II. *Installation of a Braille Printing Press*

The success of literary education for the blind is dependent to a large extent on the availability of a sufficient quantity of reading material in Braille. It is very expensive to purchase Braille books and periodicals from abroad. Besides, it is not ordinarily possible to get Braille literature in the Indian languages from other countries.

Under these circumstances, the only possible solution of the problem of having an adequate number of books and journals in Braille, is to install a Braille printing press. To have a press is, in the long run, much cheaper than buying books from abroad. The need of such a press has been keenly felt for a long time by the workers and instructors of the blind in this country. It is a matter of deep regret that the boys and girls of blind schools in India have to continue the hard task of embossing their text-books with their own hands. This practice involves a great hardship and a huge waste of time on the part of these school children. If we have a Braille press of our own and print books for the use of the blind school of our province as well as those of other provinces, the task of educating blind children will be much more pleasant and efficient than what it used to be and has been up till now.

The press is also absolutely necessary for the purpose of printing books on literature, science, etc., for the use of the adult blind. In the absence of printed Braille books, the blind adults will have to transcribe their most-needed books with their own hands. Obviously, it is not possible to transcribe many books in this way, and the inevitable result

will be that the blind adults will not be very keen about learning how to read and write Braille. I may mention here that reading and writing Braille is a much more slow and tedious process than ordinary reading and writing, and the education will be slower and more unpleasant if they have to transcribe their own books.

I may state, for general information, that all the large organisations for the blind in the countries I visited, have Braille printing presses for embossing books and journals for those who need them. The National Library for the Blind, London, has about half a million Braille books which it lends out free to all who ask for them. The Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., and the Public Library for the Blind in New York, have a still larger number of books for the free use of especially the adult blind. The Federal Government of the United States donates 225,000 dollars per annum to the American Printing House for the Blind for the purpose of embossing text-books for school and college students as well as books of general interest.

There should be a Braille printing press at our proposed Lighthouse. I visited several Braille printing plants in Europe and America, studying carefully the mechanisms of the machines, and I shall be able to render assistance in the growth and development of such a plant at the Lighthouse. It may be stated here that in New York and Japan, some of these presses are managed by blind people.

III. *Education of Blind-Deaf-Mute Children and Adults*

In addition to the visually handicapped, there is another group of individuals who are more unfortunate, and whose educational problems are more difficult to solve. These are the blind-deaf-mute persons, suffering from the triple handicap of blindness, deafness, and dumbness. Helen Keller, Laura Bridgman, and a few others have shown what these people can do if educational facilities are provided for them. During my second visit to America, I discussed with Miss Helen Keller the problems of the blind-deaf-mute, and studied the methods of teaching them.

According to the Census Report of 1931, there were, in Bengal, 179 blind-deaf-mute persons, and 1,072 in the whole of India.

I consider it very necessary to introduce the education of these unfortunate persons at the proposed Lighthouse. Such education has not been attempted anywhere in India, except in a blind institution in Bombay.

It may be stated here that the education of these persons is a costly affair, since they need individual attention and supervision during the whole day and night. *However, to awaken their minds and to make them sensitive to the impressions of the objective world, in spite of the most important gates of knowledge shut, is worth spending all the money that is available.*

In Europe and America, the education and training of these persons was introduced about the middle of the last century and there has been a remarkable

progress in this field in course of only one-hundred years. In Great Britain and the United States, special journals are published for these and special radio-sets have been made in the United States for their use. *I strongly believe that no person in the world will have the slightest hesitation in rendering substantial assistance in carrying out a scheme for educating those who cannot see, hear and speak.* To make their hopelessly miserable lives worth living should be the concern of one and all, claiming the possession of a heart.

I may state here that my wife Mrs. Evelyn Roy, who comes from the United States, wrote an article describing the methods of educating the blind-deaf-mute, which was published in the *Statesman* of the 29th September, 1940. She studied with me the up-to-date methods of teaching these triply-handicapped individuals, and she will be very glad to offer her services at the Lighthouse on a purely voluntary basis.

IV. *Department of Publicity, Placement, and General Welfare Work for the Blind*

The importance of a department at the proposed Lighthouse dealing with publicity, placement, and other items of welfare work for the blind, can hardly be emphasised. This work is considered to be so essential that every large organisation for the blind abroad has on its staff a publicity and placement officer.

There should be a ceaseless publicity to the work done by, or on behalf of, the blind individuals

if their social or economic status is to be improved. It is rightly believed that the sightless persons suffer more from the illogical public attitude towards them than from the deprivation of their vision. The sighted public of every country, especially that of India, have very poor and inadequate conceptions of the abilities and educational needs of blind individuals. It is through constant and vigorous agitation by means of press, platform and radio that these misconceptions have to be removed. *To change the present public attitude towards the blind should be the ultimate goal of every blind organisation, and when this ideal will be realised, 75% of the welfare work for the blind will be done.*

In order to give a regular publicity to the needs and problems of the blind, I intend to publish a journal once every two months, in which I shall record the activities of the proposed Lighthouse and write articles on blind education and blind psychology in general. This publication will make the public familiar with the ways and needs of the blind, and it will also lead to the co-ordination of the welfare work for the blind all over India. At present, there is no exchange of ideas among the different blind organisations of our country. This kind of isolation retards the progress of blind education to a considerable extent. The publication of the journal will create a better understanding among the organisations for the blind and will accelerate the advance of work for the visually handicapped. This journal will, to some extent, follow the model of the "New Beacon," published by the National Institute for the Blind in London, and "Outlook for the Blind,"

published by the American Foundation for the Blind in New York.

The function of placement is a very important phase of blind work. What will the blind men and women do at the end of their education and training? The employers are usually very suspicious about their abilities, and hence, reluctant to engage them. If the blind individuals cannot secure suitable employment, what is the use of their education? *The public should be made to realise that the money they spend to educate the blind, is spent in vain if later they refuse to provide them with suitable employment.*

It is obvious that we, in India, are losing very heavily by refusing to employ blind individuals. Our society has to bear the burden of these people anyhow; why should it not, then, take something out of them? Besides, in certain spheres of activity, the blind individuals can render better and more efficient service than even the seeing. The Western countries have realised this truth and have been prompt to take advantage of it.

There is another way of looking at it. *Real sympathy is shown to blind persons not by feeding them at public expense and keeping them idle at home, but by giving them education and burdening them with work and responsibility.* This truth has not been realised in India, and all efforts in helping the blind have, thus, been misguided and abortive. Dr. Childs, Professor of Psychology at Teachers' College, Columbia University, has rightly said:

"*For an individual to be a member of a society and yet have no responsible part in its activities is a*

form of social ostracism that breeds disastrous spiritual consequences."

The task of the publicity and placement officer is to solve the economic problems of the blind as far as possible. He studies the market conditions and provides the necessary vocational guidance to the blind. He meets the employer personally and tries to convince him of the abilities of a particular blind candidate for a situation. As a result of such constant and watchful vigilance over the needs and problems of blind persons, the sightless individuals of the Western countries and of Japan have become much more normalised and socialised than those in our country.

Besides publicity and placement, the proposed Lighthouse will engage itself in carrying out several other items of welfare work for the blind. Since the Lighthouse will be the first of its kind not only in this province, but in the whole of India, it will naturally be called upon to face and solve various problems of the blind in this country. To illustrate just a few of these items of welfare work for the blind, I may state the following:

(*a*) To record and disseminate correct statistics of the blind. These statitsics will include the causes of blindness, the age when blindness occurred, and other facts about each blind individual. The detailed knowledge of these facts is, as is apparent, indispensable to further development and progress in the education and psychology of the blind.

(*b*) To initiate certain legislations intended to improve the general conditions of the blind. Several enactments of this nature have been enforced in many countries of Europe and America. To men-

tion just two of them, "The Blind Persons Act," 1920, passed by the British Parliament, and, "Randolph-Sheppard Act," 1935, passed by the Congress of the United States of America, have provided for many compensatory privileges for the blind in those countries and improved their lot considerably.

(c) To organise a club for the blind, where they meet occasionally and discuss the ways and means of bettering their conditions. Games and other recreational activities will also be carried on at the said club.

(d) To open new avenues of employment for the blind in this country, as has been done in the West and in Japan. For instance, *in Great Britain and America, there is no bar against blind persons being eligible for Government service.* In Germany, a specified percentage of the employees in a large factory must be taken from among the physically handicapped persons. In Japan, the profession of massage has been virtually restricted to visually handicapped persons.

In the foregoing pages, I have mentioned only four items of work which the proposed Lighthouse will undertake as soon as it is established. There are several other important educational and welfare programmes for the visually handicapped, *e.g.*, education of pre-school blind children, education of children with partial vision, provisions for the uneducable and the unemployable blind, active research-work in the psychology and education of the blind, etc., which will be taken up later when the Lighthouse will have more funds at its disposal.

We should inaugurate our new institution without any further delay on the basis of the brief

scheme, as outlined in the preceding pages. It is very likely that difficulties in galore will present themselves in the wake of the execution of our plan; but we shall have to proceed onward in spite of them in the interest of the blind in India, who are anxiously waiting to be retrieved from the most hopeless and helpless condition in which they find themselves to-day on account of the culpable inaction and indifference of the public in this matter. May God inspire us with the courage and the spirit of sacrifice indispensable to the type of work we are going to undertake.

PROBLEMS OF THE ADULT BLIND *

(Speech delivered at the Rotary Club, Calcutta, on the 3rd June, 1941, under the Chairmanship of the President of the Club.)

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I am extremely thankful to you, members of the Rotary Club, for giving me the opportunity of addressing you for the second time. In my first speech, I discussed the problems in the education of blind children. To-day, I shall place before you a few typical problems in the life of an adult blind

* Published in the *Statesman*, Calcutta and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta (both on the 4th June, 1941); *Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta, 5th June, 1941; and *Eastern Rotary Wheel*, Calcutta, July, 1941.

person in our country and suggest the ways in which those problems can be solved. Owing to the limitation of time, my narrative has to be very brief.

The lot of the blind adults of our country is very pitiable indeed! Although they constitute about 90% of the total number of blind persons in almost every province, yet practically nothing has so far been done to ameliorate their conditions and remove the depressing monotony of their lives through education and employment. Generally, the blind adults in India just remain at home, if they have any, and spend their days lamenting over their physical handicap and blaming God and society.

In the Western countries, however, the picture is completely different. Through the co-operation of the Government and the public, Lighthouses and other centres have been established, where the adult blind receive education and training in accordance with their individual needs. Most of the employable blind adults have been given suitable employments by means of which they have become completely or partially self-supporting. The County Councils in Great Britain have opened special departments sponsoring programmes of training and employment for the adult blind in their particular areas. In almost every State of the United States of America, there is a Government Department, known as the "State Commission for the Blind," which deals with the needs and problems of the adult blind in that particular State. In both these countries, pensions have been introduced and homes established for those blind adults who are found to be definitely unemployable. According to a law. recently enacted by the British Parliament, a blind

adult is to be pensioned off at the age of 40, while a sighted person is not entitled to his pension before he is 65.

The above brief sketch of what is being done for the blind adults in Great Britain and the United States of America, where their number is so very much less than the number of the adult blind in India, is an adequate commentary on what should be done for them in our country.

Roughly speaking, the term " Adult blind " includes blind persons who are 16 years of age and over. It comprises two distinct groups of people having different psychological and social problems, *viz.*, those who lost their sight from birth or during the early years of their lives, and those who have become blind in later years.

According to the Census Report of 1931, there were, in Bengal, about 33,000 adult blind above the age of 16 out of a total of about 38,000 blind persons, belonging to all age levels. In other words, about 90% of the blind individuals of this province are adult. This ratio of the adult blind to the total of blind persons holds good with slight variations in almost every other province in India.

Although some provision, however inadequate it may be, has been made for the education and training of blind boys and girls of school going age in all provinces except a few, yet, as I have said before, practically nothing has been done for the adult blind who form such a huge majority in the sightless community in every province. It can easily be imagined how blank, empty and dependent the life of a person becomes who has the misfortune of losing his eyesight in his adulthood. After this catastrophe, he

has to face not only the psychological problems of adjusting himself to his friends and relatives, but also the problems of earning his livelihood and lessening the burden of his life by keeping himself occupied with some sort of useful activity. In India, there is no systematic arrangement to impart training to these unfortunate individuals, which will make them fit for some productive work. As a result, they either swell the number of beggars or become hopeless and contemptible dependents on their relatives and friends.

In my opinion, the blind people have a more urgent need of education than even the seeing. Two reasons may be cited in support of this statement:

First, the blind persons cannot be employed in any work without receiving a systematic training and education extending over several years, while there are various spheres of activity for the seeing individuals in which they may be employed without such protracted training and education. In those activities, the mere possession of sight, combined with some amount of common sense, is all that is needed to qualify a person for employment.

Secondly, the seeing people are able to move about freely and have several interests to keep themselves busy with But the sightless individuals have to carry on a dreary and monotonous existence and have a feeling of hopelessness and aloneness in the world, if they are not taught some art or craft which will keep them occupied, and make them feel that time, after all, moves.

In order to relieve the miseries of the adult blind and to make them happy and contributing members of society, immediate arrangements should be

made for their vocational training as well as literary and musical education. The type of education should be adjusted to the needs of individual cases.

The education and training of another important group of blind adults should be stressed in this connection. These are persons who have been and will be deprived of their eyesight in war. Every war is responsible for a large volume of blindness, and the persons losing their eyesight have serious problems of training and employment facing them when they return from the battlefield. To solve these problems, Sir Arthur Pearson, himself blind, founded St. Dunstan's in London. At present, branches of this organisation have been established all over the British Empire except India.* I had the privilege of meeting Sir Ian Fraser, a blind member of the House of Commons, and the present Chairman of St. Dunstan's in London, and of discussing with him the problems of war-blinded persons, tackled by his organisation. I also had the opportunity of studying the work done by the Lighthouse in Paris for the war-blinded civilians.

India also has its duties towards the Indian war-blinded. It is only right and proper that the people who have lost and will lose their eyesight for the defence of their country, should be given an opportunity to become happy and respectable members of society through education and employment.

* See the second foot-note to the speech entitled, "How the Blind can help War Efforts and how we can help the War-Blinded," included elsewhere in this book, in which the information about the establishment of St. Dunstan's in India in July, 1943, has been stated.

The education of the blind adults or children presupposes the existence of a large quantity of reading matter in Braille. It is very expensive to purchase Braille books and periodicals from abroad. Besides, it is not usually possible to get Braille literature in the Indian languages from other countries.

Under these circumstances, the only possible solution of the problem of having an adequate number of books and journals in Braille is to install a Braille printing press. To have a press is, in the long run, much cheaper than buying books from abroad The need of such a press has been keenly felt for a long time by the workers and instructors of the blind in this country. It is a matter of regret that the boys and girls of blind schools in India have to continue the hard task of embossing their textbooks with their own hands. This practice involves a great hardship and a huge waste of time on the part of these school children. If we have a Braille press of our own and print books for the use of all the blind schools in this country, the task of educating blind children will be much more pleasant and efficient than what it has been up till now.

The printing press is also absolutely necessary for the purpose of printing books on literature, science, etc., for the use of the adult blind. In the absence of printed Braille books, the blind adults will have to transcribe their most needed books with their own hands. Obviously, it is not possible to transcribe many books in this way, and the inevitable result will be that the blind adults will not be very keen about learning how to read and write Braille. I may mention here that reading and writing Braille is a much more slow and tedious process

than ordinary reading and writing, and the education of the adult blind will be slower and more unpleasant if they have to transcribe their own books.

I may state for general information that all the large organisations for the blind in the countries I visited, have Braille printing presses for embossing books and journals for those who need them. The National Library for the Blind, London, has about half a million Braille books which it lends out free to all who ask for them. The Library of Congress in Washington, D. C., and the Public Library for the Blind in the New York city have a still larger number of books for the free use of specially the adult blind. The Federal Government of the United States donates 225,000 dollars per annum to the American Printing House for the Blind for the purpose of embossing text-books for school and college students as well as books of general interest.

In connection with the problems of the adult blind, the great importance of the functions of publicity and placement should be emphasised. This work is considered to be so essential that every large organisation for the blind abroad has on its staff a publicity and placement officer.

There should be a ceaseless publicity to the work done by, or on behalf of, the blind individuals if their social and economic status is to be improved. It is usually believed that sightless persons suffer more from the public attitude towards them than from the deprivation of their vision. The sighted public of every country, particularly that of India, have very poor and inadequate conceptions of the abilities and educational needs of blind individuals. It is through constant and vigorous agitation by

means of press, platform and radio that these misconceptions have to be removed. To change the present public attitude towards the blind should be the ultimate goal of every blind organisation, and when this ideal will be realised, 75% of the welfare work for the blind will be done.

The function of placement is a very important phase of blind work. What will the blind men and women do at the end of their education and training? The employers are usually very suspicious about their abilities, and hence, reluctant to engage them. If the blind individuals cannot secure suitable employment, what is the use of their education? The public should be made to realise that the money they spend to educate the blind, is spent in vain if later they refuse to provide them with suitable employment It is apparent that we, in India, have incurred a great economic loss for not employing our blind individuals. Our society has to bear the burden of these people anyhow; why should it not, then, take something out of them? Besides, in certain spheres of activity, blind individuals can render better and more efficient service than even the seeing. The Western countries have realised this truth and have been prompt to take advantage of it.

There is another way of looking at it. Real sympathy is shown to blind persons not by feeding them at public expense and keeping them idle at home, but by giving them education and burdening them with work and responsibility. This truth has not been realised in India, and all efforts in helping the blind have, thus, been misguided and abortive. Dr. Childs, Professor of Psychology at Columbia University, has rightly said:

"For an individual to be a member of society and yet have no responsible part in its activities is a form of social ostracism that breeds disastrous spiritual consequences."

The task of the placement officer is to solve the economic problems of the blind as far as possible. He studies the market conditions and gives necessary vocational guidance to the blind. He meets the employers personally and tries to convince them of the abilities of a particular blind candidate for a situation. As a result of such constant and watchful vigilance over the needs and problems of blind persons, the sightless individuals in the Western countries and in Japan have become much more normalised and socialised than those in our country.

Besides publicity and placement, there are other items of welfare work for the adult blind. To illustrate just a few of what these items of welfare work may be, I may mention the following:

To record and disseminate correct statistics of the blind. These statistics will include the causes of blindness, the age when blindness occurred, and other facts about each blind individual. The detailed knowledge of these facts is indispensable to further development and progress in the education and psychology of the blind.

To initiate certain legislations intended to improve the general conditions of the blind. Several enactments of this nature have been enforced in many countries of Europe and America. To mention just two of them, the Blind Persons' Act, 1920, passed by the British Parliament, and the Randolph-Sheppard Act, 1935, passed by the Congress of the United States of America, have provided for many compen-

satory privileges for the blind in those countries and improved their lot considerably.

To open new avenues of employment for the blind in this country, as has been done in the West and in Japan. For instance, in Great Britain and America, there is no bar against blind persons being eligible for Government service. In Germany, a certain percentage of the employees in a large factory must be taken from among the physically handicapped persons. In the United States, according to the O'Day Act, passed very recently, the Federal Government is compelled to purchase dusters, brooms, etc., made by blind persons. This has given employment to a large number of persons without sight. In Japan, the profession of massage has been virtually restricted to visually handicapped persons.

In order to carry out all these activities, a new institution, called " The Lighthouse for the Blind, " has been ushered into existence. This Lighthouse for the Blind is the first of its kind in India, and the problems of the adult blind in Bengal as well as in the rest of India will be the main concern of this institution. It does not, therefore, involve a duplication of the work carried on by the existing blind schools of this country, since they deal only with the problems affecting the blind children of school-going age Besides, the Lighthouse will endeavour to ameliorate the conditions of the blind in general, functioning as a central clearing-house for the visually handicapped all over India. The blind schools of this country, dealing only with a particular section of the blind population and having provincial and other local interests in view, can, thus, be dis-

tinguished from the Lighthouse, both in ideals and modes of operation.

In all the progressive countries of Europe and in America as well as in Japan, there is at least one such organisation striving to solve the various problems of the sightless individuals in those countries. It is to be noted that the Lighthouse for the Blind in Osaka, Japan, was founded and is being administered with remarkable success by a blind Japanese gentleman.

I am very happy to be able to say that several prominent citizens of Calcutta, belonging to all communities, are offering their valuable services towards the development of our new institution. We have reasonable grounds to believe that His Excellency the Governor of Bengal will very shortly honour and support this institution by becoming its Patron.

May I, as the Honorary Secretary of the Lighthouse for the Blind, appeal to you for your sympathy and support towards the great cause we have undertaken to uphold and promote? Everyone of you will, I am quite sure, shudder to consider yourself to be suddenly deprived of your eyesight owing to some disease or accident, and to be cut off from your work and social life. But, ladies and gentlemen, there are hundreds and thousands of such persons in India. Will you not help this institution which is trying to help these afflicted people? It is rightly remarked by Miss Helen Keller, the world-famous blind-deaf-mute woman:

"There is no law in the statute books compelling people to move up closer on the bench of life to make room for a blind brother; but there is a divine law written on the hearts of men constraining them

to make a place for him, not only because he is unfortunate, but also because it is his right as a human being to share God's greatest gift, the privilege of man to go forth unto his work."

THE BLIND AND WHAT THEY CAN EXPECT *

(Summary of a speech delivered at the Chowringhee Y. M. C. A., Calcutta, on the 17th June, 1941, under the Chairmanship of Mr. W. Buchan, the then Hony. Secretary, Rotary Club. Calcutta.)

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

Since the gathering has been held in the evening, it has undoubtedly been very inconvenient for many to attend this meeting owing to the regulations for the observance of strict black-out conditions in the city. But the difficulties and inconveniences caused by this temporary black-out should remind the sighted public of the miseries of the blind who live in permanent black-out.

Coming to the topic for discussion this evening, I may say that every self-respecting sightless person in every country has two principal expectations—first, he expects to be treated as a normal human being, and, secondly, he wants to be a contributing member of society.

* Published in the *Statesman*, Calcutta, and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta (both on the 18th June, 1941).

In order to achieve the first object, certain misconceptions about blindness should be removed from the minds of seeing persons. For instance, they should know that the blind do not form a class by themselves and cannot, therefore, be treated as such. The cause of blindness, the age when blindness occurred, and the amount of vision left,—these factors sharply distinguish one blind person from the other. A seeing person should also know that blindness in itself does not affect the personality of an individual. The sightless persons are normal people minus the sense of vision.

To attain the second object, a blind person should receive proper education and training, commencing from the very early years of his life. It is to be regretted that there is not a single nursery school for blind babies in India, although the number of such children is about 15,000 in this country and more than 1,000 in Bengal. There are many Sunshine Homes in Europe and America, engaged in imparting suitable training to sightless babies.

The school education of blind boys and girls in India is very much behind that obtaining in the Western countries and Japan. The number of blind institutions in this country is too few for about 50,000 sightless boys and girls of schoolgoing age. In Bengal, there is only one school for about 5,000 blind boys and girls.

In order to cope with this problem, I suggest that the blind boys and girls should be educated with their sighted compatriots in ordinary seeing schools. This kind of co-education has been very successful in some countries in Europe and specially in the United States of America. With only one teacher on the

staff, who is specially trained in the education and psychology of the blind, an ordinary school can carry on this type of co-education very efficiently.

In this connection, I may refer to the training programme meant for the teachers and workers of the blind, conducted at the Teachers' Training Department of the Calcutta University since 1940.

One of the main reasons of the awful retardation of the education of the blind in India is that the teachers and workers for the blind have not, in many instances, the two essential requisites, *viz.*, a good general education and the specialised training in blind education. I feel sure that the persons receiving training in the education of the blind at the Calcutta University will be able to fulfil these two conditions.

Another fact to be regretted is that nothing has been done in our country regarding the printing of books and journals in Braille. The deplorable result is that the sightless boys and girls have to transcribe their books with their own hands and have very little to browse on. There are millions of books and about four score of journals printed in English Braille. In Japan, there is even a daily newspaper in Braille.

The Lighthouse for the Blind, a recently established institution in Calcutta, has already sent an order to the United States for a Braille printing press. The printing of Braille literature in English and in the Indian languages will commence as soon as the printing press arrives.

An essential prerequisite to the printing of Braille books and journals in the Indian languages is to devise a uniform Braille type for the whole of

India. At present, there are about seven or eight systems prevalent in different parts of the country. The Braille system which is used in Bengal, was devised by Mr. Ramananda Chatterjee, the Editor of the *Modern Review* and *Prabasi*.*

It is very gratifying to note that the Government of India has at last agreed to appoint a Committee towards the end of this year in order to adopt a uniform Braille Code for the whole of India.

In conclusion, I may state that the All-India Lighthouse for the Blind has been ushered into existence in order to ameliorate the lot of the blind in this country by printing Braille books and journals, training the adult blind, functioning as the central clearinghouse for the blind in India, and in several other ways. I appeal to all to help this institution in carrying on its noble mission.

CAREERS FOR THE BLIND †

(Summary of a speech delivered at the Chakra Baithak Club on the 20th June, 1941, under the Chairmanship of Mr. K. P. Khaitan, the President of the Club.)

In India, the blind persons have, as a rule, no career except that of carrying on a miserable and

* Mr. Chatterjee died on the 30th September, 1943.

† Published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, and *Azad*, Calcutta (both on the 21st June, 1942); *Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta, and *Advance*, Calcutta (both on the 22nd June, 1941); *Star of India*, Calcutta, 24th June, 1941; *Statesman*, Calcutta, 25th June, 1941; and *Sind Observer*, Karachi, 26th June, 1941

humiliating existence until it is terminated by death. The case is completely different with the majority of the blind in the European countries, America and in Japan. I had the privilege of studying the employment situation of the blind through personal visits to these countries, and of meeting several successful individuals in different walks of life.

The careers in which the blind persons in these countries are usually engaged, may be divided into three groups: (*i*) Professions; (*ii*) Music and (*iii*) Industrial, Agricultural and other occupations.

(*i*) *Professions*

These include the so-called intellectual occupations which a large number of blind persons are carrying on very successfully either independently or as hired jobs. It is needless to say that blindness in itself does not affect the actual or potential intelligence of an individual, and blind persons can, therefore, give very good accounts of themselves in those occupations in which intelligence, concentration, thinking, memory and other components of the mind play the most important part. Of course, some sighted assistance may be needed here and there. But, then, it is not at all difficult for a blind person to appoint suitable seeing assistants if he himself is entrusted with some paying work.

In course of my travels in Europe, America and Japan, I met with successful blind lawyers, editors, reporters, professors, school-teachers, administrators, life insurance agents, radio-announcers, doctors, clergymen, and persons engaged in several other professions. I remember having met Miss

Smith, who is a blind reporter of *Buffalo Express*—a very influential daily paper in the State of New York. She travels throughout the continent of America and Canada, guided by her Seeing Eye dog, and thus collects news and views for her paper.

It should be noted with particular emphasis that in several of the countries I visited, there is no bar against blind persons being eligible for Government service. Many sightless persons are actually engaged in the Government service in Great Britain and the United States. I have read notices issued by the Federal Government of the United States, asking blind steno-typists to apply for Government appointments. Mr. Henry Fawcett, a blind Englishman, served as the Postmaster-General of Great Britain for several years, and, thus, held a post in the British Ministry. It is interesting to note that he was also a member of the British Parliament, and, owing to his great sympathy for India, he was nicknamed the "India Member." In India, however, a blind person cannot be appointed to a Government job, not even to the lecturership in a Government college, on account of his blindness!

There are many active politicians and legislators among blind persons in Europe and America. The blind members of the British Parliament and of the Congress of the United States have succeeded in passing several laws which have greatly ameliorated the lot of the blind in those countries.

So far as the work for the blind is concerned, it is recognised that capable blind persons are better suited to this work than even the sighted. The reason is that the sightless persons know exactly where the shoe pinches Besides, their examples

provide a strong inspiration to the blind under training and in general. The heads of the most of the State Commissions for the Blind in America, Mr. Robert Irwin, the Executive Director of the American Foundation for the blind, the greatest national organisation for the blind in the United States, Mr. Takeo Iwahashi, the Founder-director of the Lighthouse for the Blind in Osaka, Japan, Mr. Ian Fraser, the Chairman of St. Dunstan's in London, and several other persons engaged in welfare work for the blind, are themselves without sight.

(ii) *Music*

The general idea that the blind individuals are born musicians, is absolutely false. It must, however, be admitted that the profession of music offers a less handicap to a blind person than other occupations. There are many expert blind musicians and entertainers who are making a handsome income through the exercise of their talents.

(iii) *Industrial, Agricultural and other Occupations*

The majority of blind persons are engaged in these occupations. Many laws have been passed in the Western countries to protect the blind workers against seeing competitors. In Germany, a certain percentage from the physically handicapped persons must be employed in a large factory by virtue of a legislative enactment. The Randolph-Sheppard Act and the Wagner-O'Day Act have given a good deal of protection and concession to the blind workers in America. In Japan, the profession of massage and

acupuncture have been more or less entirely restricted to persons without sight.

To mention some of these occupations, I may cite weaving, caning, telephone-operating, poultry-raising, shop-keeping, trading, etc. Thousands of sightless individuals are carrying on these occupations very successfully.

The reasons for this wonderful achievement in the Western countries and Japan are mainly three:

First, there are elaborate arrangements for the education and training of blind persons—both children and adults. In our country, there is practically no provision for the education of the adult blind, and the provision for the education of blind children is very limited. In order to extend the scope of this education, the system of educating blind children with their seeing brothers and sisters in ordinary schools, as done in other countries, should be introduced without any further delay. It is gratifying to note that a few head-masters of seeing schools have already recognised the strength of this suggestion and have agreed to work this plan out in their schools.

Secondly, extensive investigations into the market conditions and into the types of work that blind persons can do very well, have been undertaken. New industries and occupations have been tried.

Lastly, great efforts have been made to change the unreasonable public attitude towards the blind and their abilities. It has been realised that there is hardly any sense in spending public money for the purpose of educating and training blind persons, and then refusing to provide suitable employments to them. It has further been realised that the blind

employees take more care to do their part efficiently as they know that they always work against public prejudice and suspicion.

The "Lighthouse for the Blind," the recently established institution, will undertake to solve the economic problems of the blind as far as possible. It will have programmes of vocational guidance and of discovering vocational aptitudes. It will also make a thorough study of cottage industries, factory work, agricultural pursuits, and other types of activities in order to find out which work the blind are particularly suited to. The authorities of this institution realise that the blind should not be educated or trained at all if later the employers refuse to engage them simply on the ground of blindness.

We appeal to the public, to the Government, and to all other public bodies to help us with funds and suggestions so that we may succeed in our mission to make the blind in India happy and contributing members of society.

দৃষ্টিহীন ও চক্ষুষ্মান ছেলেমেয়েদের সহ-শিক্ষা *

গত ১৯৩৯ সালের আদমসুমারী হইতে জানা যায় যে, সমগ্র ভারতে দৃষ্টিহীনদের সংখ্যা ছয় লক্ষের কিছু বেশী। অন্ধত্ব নিবারণ-কার্য্যে ব্যাপৃত কর্ম্মিগণ মনে করেন যে, আদমসুমারীর এই সংখ্যা প্রকৃত সংখ্যা অপেক্ষা

* ১৯৪১ সালের ২২শে জুন তারিখের "আনন্দ বাজার পত্রিকা"র কলিকাতা সংস্করণে প্রকাশিত।

অনেক কম। তথাপি এই গণনা-অনুসারে পৃথিবীর ভিতরে ভারতে অন্ধদের সংখ্যা সবচেয়ে বেশী।

এই প্রবন্ধে যে সব দৃষ্টিহীন বালকবালিকাদের শিক্ষা-সম্বন্ধে আলোচনা করা হবে তাদের সংখ্যা প্রায় ৭০,০০০ হাজার। তাদের বয়স ৫ থেকে ২০র মধ্যে। অন্ধদের জন্য ভারতে প্রায় বিশটি (২০) বিদ্যালয় আছে; সেখানে প্রায় এক সহস্র দৃষ্টিহীন বালকবালিকা শিক্ষালাভ কোরছে। অন্য কথায়, সুযোগ ও সুবিধার অভাবে ৬৯,০০০ হাজার দৃষ্টিহীন ছেলেমেয়ে শিক্ষা হতে বঞ্চিত।

এখানে একটি প্রশ্ন উঠতে পারে যে, যখন এদেশে লক্ষ লক্ষ চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিই শিক্ষা পায় না, তখন কয়েক সহস্র অন্ধ বালকবালিকার শিক্ষার সুযোগ না থাকায় আক্ষেপের কারণ কি? এর উত্তর হ'চেছ্ এই যে, এত লক্ষ লক্ষ ছেলেমেয়ের শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা কোরতে না পারা যে-কোন দেশের পক্ষেই অত্যন্ত লজ্জার বিষয়।

যাহোক, আমরা বিশ্বাস করি যে, দৃষ্টিহীন ব্যক্তিদের শিক্ষার প্রয়োজনীয়তা চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিদের চেয়েও বেশী। এই যুক্তির পক্ষে দুটি বিশেষ উল্লেখযোগ্য কারণ হচেছ্—প্রথমতঃ, সুব্যবস্থিত এবং কয়েক বৎসর স্থায়ী শিক্ষা ব্যতীত অন্ধ ব্যক্তিদিগকে কোন কার্য্যে নিয়োজিত করা যায় না; অন্য পক্ষে, বহুকাল-স্থায়ী শিক্ষা ব্যতিরেকেই চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিদিগকে নানাবিধ কার্য্যে নিযুক্ত করা যেতে পারে। এই সব কাজের পক্ষে কেবলমাত্র কিছু সাধারণ জ্ঞান ও দৃষ্টিশক্তি থাকলেই যথেষ্ট।

দ্বিতীয়তঃ, চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিরা যথেচছভাবে চলাফেরা ক'রতে এবং নানা রকম কাজ নিয়ে সময় কাটাতে পারে। দৃষ্টিহীন ব্যক্তিদের লেখাপড়া বা অন্য কোন রকম বৃত্তি না শেখালে তাদের জীবন অত্যন্ত নিরানন্দময় ও একঘেয়ে হ'য়ে পড়ে। জগদ্বিখ্যাত অন্ধ-মূক-বধির বিদুষী হেলেন কেলার যথার্থই ব'লেছেন, "অন্ধদের সবচেয়ে দুঃখের কারণ অলসতা, দৃষ্টিহীনতা নয়।"

সুতরাং এখন মূল প্রশ্ন হচেছ, কি উপায়ে আমাদের অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েদের শিক্ষার সুযোগ ও সুবিধা ক'রে দেওয়া যেতে পারে। এই সমস্যা সহজেই মিটতে পারে যদি আমরা বর্ত্তমান শতাব্দীর প্রারম্ভ হ'তে আমেরিকা এবং ইউরোপের বিভিন্ন দেশে শিক্ষার যে আদর্শ এবং পদ্ধতি প্রচলিত আছে তা' গ্রহণ করি। সেই পদ্ধতি হচেছ, সাধারণ বিদ্যালয়ে দৃষ্টিহীন এবং চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিদের সহ-শিক্ষা প্রবর্ত্তন করা।

সাধারণতঃ আমরা মনে করি যে, কেবলমাত্র বিশেষ আবাসযুক্ত বিদ্যালয়েই অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েরা শিক্ষা লাভ কোরতে পারে। প্রায় পঞ্চাশ বৎসর পূর্ব্বে আমেরিকা ও ইউরোপেও এ ধারণাই ছিল। বর্ত্তমানে এ সব দেশের অধিকাংশ অন্ধ-শিক্ষাব্রতী বিশ্বাস করেন যে, দৃষ্টিহীন ছেলেমেয়েদের সমদৈহিক প্রতিবন্ধকযুক্ত ব্যক্তিদের সঙ্গে কোন বিশেষ বিদ্যালয়ে অধ্যয়ন করার চেয়ে সাধারণ বিদ্যালয়ে চক্ষুষ্মান ছাত্রদের সহিত শিক্ষিত হওয়া বাঞ্ছনীয়।

আবাসযুক্ত বিদ্যালয় অন্ধ ছাত্রদের বিশেষ উপযোগী, তা' তর্কের খাতিরে ধ'রে নিলেও দেশ জুড়ে এইরূপ শিক্ষাকেন্দ্র স্থাপন কোরতে প্রচুর অর্থের প্রয়োজন। এটা সহজেই অনুমেয় যে, ৭০,০০০ হাজার অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েদের জন্য পর্য্যাপ্ত বিদ্যালয় গড়ে তুলবার উপযুক্ত অর্থ সংগ্রহ করা অসম্ভব না হলেও অত্যন্ত কষ্টসাধ্য।

অন্যপক্ষে, দৃষ্টিহীন ছেলেমেয়েদের জন্য সাধারণ বিদ্যালয়ে শিক্ষালাভের ব্যবস্থা কোরলে অভিভাবকদের খুব বেশী অর্থব্যয় হয় না। চক্ষুষ্মান ভাই-বোনদের সঙ্গে অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েরা নির্দ্দিষ্ট বেতন দিয়ে স্থানীয় সাধারণ বিদ্যালয়ে শিক্ষা লাভ কোরতে পারে। শিক্ষকদের মধ্যে একজন থাকবেন যিনি অন্ধদের শিক্ষা এবং তাদের মনস্তত্ত্ব-বিষয়ে বিশেষ শিক্ষাপ্রাপ্ত। প্রত্যহ তিনি কিছু সময় অন্ধ ছাত্রদের সঙ্গে অতিবাহিত ক'রে তাদের বিশেষ অসুবিধাগুলো দূর কোরতে সাহায্য কোরবেন। এ ছাড়া একটি সাধারণ বিদ্যালয়ে অন্ধ ও চক্ষুষ্মান ছেলেমেয়েদের মধ্যে কোনই পার্থক্য থাকবে না।

সাধারণ বিদ্যালয়ে কয়েকটি অন্ধ ছাত্র চক্ষুষ্মান সহপাঠীর সহিত সফলতার সহিত লেখাপড়া ক'রেছে—এইরূপ ক'য়েকটি বিশিষ্ট উদাহরণ ব্যতীত আমাদের দেশের শিক্ষার ইতিহাসে সহ-শিক্ষার আন্দোলন এই প্রথম। আগেই বলা হ'য়েছে যে, পাশ্চাত্ত্য দেশে—বিশেষতঃ আমেরিকাতে—প্রায় অর্দ্ধ শতাব্দী পূর্ব্বে এইরূপ সহ-শিক্ষার প্রচলন হয়। ১৮৫১ সালে আমেরিকার পার্কিন্স (Perkins) ইনষ্টিটিউশন নামে একটি সুপ্রসিদ্ধ অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়ের প্রথম এবং বিখ্যাত অধ্যক্ষ স্যামুয়েল গ্রিডলী হাউ সাধারণ বিদ্যালয়ে অন্ধ এবং চক্ষুষ্মানদের সহ-শিক্ষার নানাবিধ সুবিধার উপর গুরুত্ব আরোপ কোরেছিলেন। এ থেকেই বুঝতে পারা যায় যে, তিনি নিজের বা নিজের বিদ্যালয়ের চেয়ে অন্ধ জাতির কল্যাণকেই বড় ব'লে মনে কোরতেন। এই সহ-শিক্ষার আদর্শ ১৯০০ সালে কার্য্যে পরিণত করার পর হ'তে আমেরিকাতে এই আন্দোলন দৃষ্টিহীন সন্তানদের পিতামাতা ও অভিভাবকদের এবং সন্তানদের নিজেদের নিকট

এমনই প্রিয় হ'য়ে উঠেছে যে, ১৯৩৬ সালের শিক্ষা-বিষয়ক হিসাবে দেখা যায় যে, সাধারণ স্কুলে অন্ধ এবং ক্ষীণদৃষ্টিসম্পন্ন বালকবালিকাদের সংখ্যা অন্ধদের আবাসযুক্ত বিদ্যালয়ের ছাত্র-সংখ্যা অপেক্ষা বেশী। সাধারণ স্কুলে এদের সংখ্যা ৭,২৫১ এবং অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়ে ৫,৮৫১। এই বিষয়ে লক্ষ্য কোরতে হবে যে, আমেরিকাতে অন্ধদের প্রথম আবাসযুক্ত বিদ্যালয় সহ-শিক্ষা প্রচলন হবার ৬৮ বৎসর পূর্ব্বে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয় এবং ঐ দেশে এইরূপ বিদ্যালয়ের সংখ্যা ৬০এর উপরে। তথাপি ৩৬ বৎসরের মধ্যে অন্ধদের বিদ্যালয় অপেক্ষা চক্ষুষ্মানদের সাধারণ বিদ্যালয়ে অধিক সংখ্যক অন্ধ এবং ক্ষীণদৃষ্টিসম্পন্ন বালকবালিকা শিক্ষালাভ ক'রেছে। এক নিউ ইয়র্ক সহরেই দুটি আবাসযুক্ত অন্ধ-বিদ্যালয় থাকা সত্ত্বেও চক্ষুষ্মানদের চারটি বিদ্যালয়ে অন্ধদের শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা হ'য়েছে।

আমেরিকাতে ঠিক এইরূপ সহ-শিক্ষার দ্রুত-প্রচলন হবার মূলে নিশ্চয়ই বিশেষ কারণ আছে। স্থানাভাবের জন্য এখানে মাত্র ছ'টি কারণ উল্লেখ করা হ'চেছ :—

১। অল্পবয়স্ক ছেলেমেয়েদের প্রতিষ্ঠানগত জীবন যতটা সম্ভব কমিয়ে আনা উচিত—এই বিজ্ঞানসম্মত সিদ্ধান্ত-অনুসারে আজকাল একাধিক শিক্ষার ক্ষেত্র এবং শিশুদের মঙ্গলকর কার্য্য পরিচালিত হয়। দিবসকালীন স্কুলের মূলতত্ত্বই ইহা। আজকাল সাধারণ বিশ্বাস এই যে, ছোট ছেলেমেয়েদের শিক্ষার ব্যাপারে আবাসযুক্ত বিদ্যালয়ের কোন প্রয়োজন নাই। আমেরিকাতে অন্ধদের শিক্ষা-সম্বন্ধে নামকরা বিশেষজ্ঞদের মধ্যে ফ্রাঙ্ক হল বিশেষ উল্লেখযোগ্য। তাঁর এই বিশ্বাস ছিল যে, অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েদের আবাসযুক্ত বিদ্যালয়ে শিক্ষালাভ করার ফলে তাদের ভবিষ্যৎ জীবনে দৃষ্টিহীনতার চেয়ে আরও অনেক গুরুতর বাধার সৃষ্টি হয়। এইরূপ প্রতিষ্ঠানের আওতায় থাকার দরুন অন্ধ ছাত্র অনুভব করে যে, সে সমাজের অপরাংশের উপর নির্ভরশীল এবং জগৎ তার ভরণ-পোষণের সংস্থান কোরতে বাধ্য। এই মনোভাব ব্যক্তিগত উদ্যম ও প্রচেষ্টার পরিপন্থী; ইহার ফলে চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিরা মনে করেন যে, দৃষ্টিহীন লোকেরা সমাজের পরগাছা-স্বরূপ। তা ছাড়া অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েরা সদাসর্ব্বদা একই রকম পারিপার্শ্বিকতার মধ্যে বসবাস কোরতে থাকায় তাদের স্বাভাবিক ব্যক্তিত্ব বিকাশ লাভ কোরতে পারে না। বহু বৎসর যাবৎ সমাজ হ'তে এরূপভাবে দূরে থাকবার পর তারা চক্ষুষ্মান জগতের সঙ্গে নিজেদের খাপ খাওয়াতে বিশেষ অসুবিধা বোধ করে। এই প্রসঙ্গে আমেরিকার সেনেটের অন্ধ-সদস্য মিঃ টমাস পি, গোর ১৯৩১ সালে নিউ ইয়র্কে অন্ধদের কার্য্যকলাপ-সম্পর্কে পৃথিবীর সকল দেশের

মিলিত সভার উদ্বোধনের সময়ে যে স্মরণীয় বক্তৃতা কোরেছিলেন, আমি তা উদ্ধৃত না করে পারি না। তিনি ব'লেছিলেন,—"অন্ধদের বিচ্ছিন্ন কোরে রেখো না। যদি অন্ধরা নিজেদের পথ নিজেরা বেছে নেয়, যদি তারা নিজেরাই অনুসংস্থান করে, তাহ'লে তাদের এইসব কাজ জগতের চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিদের সঙ্গে থেকেই কোরতে হবে। অন্ধ এবং চক্ষুষ্মান উভয়কেই মিলিতভাবে থাকতে অভ্যস্ত করান উচিত। অন্ধকার স্থানের মত আশ্রমের বিচ্ছিন্নতা পরিহার কর। অন্ধদের নিজেদের প্রতিষ্ঠানে আবদ্ধ রেখো না। অন্ধ ছেলে-মেয়েকে কেবলমাত্র অন্ধদের সংস্পর্শ ছাড়া কিংবা মাঝে মাঝে কোন বিদ্যালয় পরিদর্শক ও কোন দয়ার্দ্র ভদ্রলোক ছাড়া অন্য কারও সংস্পর্শে আসতে না দেবার মত শোকাবহ ব্যাপার আর কিছুই নাই। অন্য সকলের মত, অন্ধ সন্তান জগতের যে অংশের সংস্পর্শে থাকে সে সেই অংশ-দ্বারাই সমস্ত জগতের বিচার করে এবং সে যখন প্রতিষ্ঠান ত্যাগ কোরে বৃহৎ জগতে প্রবেশ করে তখন সে আগের মত সকলের কাছ থেকেই সদয় অভ্যর্থনা প্রত্যাশা করে। প্রতিষ্ঠানের বাইরে জীবনধারণের জন্য যে কঠোর সংগ্রামের প্রয়োজন তার জন্য সে প্রস্তুত থাকে না।

২। পিতামাতা এবং অভিভাবকগণ আবাসযুক্ত অন্ধ বিদ্যালয় অপেক্ষা সাধারণ বিদ্যালয়ের সঙ্গে বেশী পরিচিত। বিশেষ ব্যবস্থা থাকলে তাঁরা অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েদের সাধারণ বিদ্যালয়েই পাঠাতে অধিকতর ব্যগ্র।

৩। শিক্ষা-বিষয়ক মনস্তত্ত্বের আধুনিক মূল তথ্যানুসারে প্রতিষ্ঠান কখনও গৃহের স্থান অধিকার কোরতে পারে না। বহুকাল আবাসযুক্ত বিদ্যালয়ে থাকবার দরুন গৃহে এবং পরিবারের লোকজনের প্রতি অন্ধ সন্তানের মনোভাব বহুল পরিমাণে পরিবর্ত্তিত হয়। ক্রমে ক্রমে পিতামাতার এইরূপ ধারণা হয়ে যায় যে, তাঁদের অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েদের রক্ষণাবেক্ষণের জন্য প্রতিষ্ঠানের কর্ত্তৃপক্ষই দায়ী। এইরূপ মনে করবার ফলে তাঁরা অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েদের প্রতি তাঁদের কর্ত্তব্য যথার্থ ভাবে পালন করেন না। বাড়ীর সংস্পর্শে থাকলে অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েরা পিতামাতার আর্থিক অবস্থা-সম্বন্ধে সচেতন থাকে এবং নিজেরা স্বাবলম্বী হ'য়ে পরিবারের সাহায্য কোরতে উদ্যোগী হয়।

৪। চক্ষুষ্মানদের সাধারণ বিদ্যালয় অপেক্ষা আবাসযুক্ত অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়ের শিক্ষার ফল অপেক্ষাকৃত নিকৃষ্ট। আমেরিকার অন্ধ-শিক্ষা-সম্বন্ধে বিশেষজ্ঞ ডাঃ মেরী এই মতের সম্পূর্ণ সমর্থন করেন।

৫। যদি অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েরা সাধারণ বিদ্যালয়ে শিক্ষালাভ করে তাহ'লে চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিরা অন্ধদের সমস্যা-সম্বন্ধে অবহিত হবার আরও অধিক সুযোগ পায়। তা ছাড়া বিদ্যালয়ে একসঙ্গে থাকার দরুন অন্ধ ও চক্ষুষ্মান ছেলেমেয়েরা একে অন্যকে ভালভাবে বুঝতে পারে এবং দৃষ্টিহীন ছেলেমেয়েদের চেয়ে শ্রেষ্ঠ বা নিকৃষ্ট—এ রকম কোন প্রশ্নই উঠতে পারে না।

৬। আবাসযুক্ত অন্ধ বিদ্যালয় অপেক্ষা সাধারণ বিদ্যালয়ে খরচ প্রায় শতকরা পঞ্চাশ ভাগ কম। আমাদের দেশের বর্ত্তমান আর্থিক অবস্থার কথা চিন্তা ক'রলে এই যুক্তির মূল্য সবচেয়ে বেশী ব'লে প্রমাণিত হবে। পিতামাতা ও অভিভাবকগণ সাধারণতঃ আর্থিক অসচ্ছলতার দরুন তাঁদের দৃষ্টিহীন ছেলে-মেয়েদের শিক্ষার জন্য বাড়ী হ'তে বহুদূরের আবাসযুক্ত অথবা অন্য প্রকার বিশেষ বিদ্যালয়ে পাঠাতে অক্ষম। এই সব ছেলেমেয়েরা নিজেদের বাড়ীতে থেকে স্থানীয় সাধারণ বিদ্যালয়ে অনায়াসেই শিক্ষালাভ কোরতে পারে। এইরূপ ব্যবস্থা না হ'লে আমাদের দেশে এত অধিকসংখ্যক দৃষ্টিহীন ছেলেমেয়েদের শিক্ষা-সমস্যার সমাধান কখনই হবে না।

LIFTING THE VEIL OF DARKNESS *

(Summary of a speech delivered at the Bhowanipur Y. M. C. A., on the 8th July, 1941, under the Chairmanship of Mr. P. N. Brahma, the then Mayor of Calcutta.)

All living creatures, except a few, are genuinely afraid of darkness and try their utmost either to avoid it or to remove it. From that very moment when the momentous utterance was made,—" Let there be light," human beings have been hankering after light and more light.

* Published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, and *Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta (both on the 11th July, 1941).

This "light" does not necessarily have to be confined to its physical interpretation We should be and are afraid of intellectual and moral darkness in the same way as we are of physical darkness. A civilised child fears not only the absence of light from his eyes, but he also detests the absence of light from his mental horizon.

How can we apply this conception of light to those persons who are without the sense of physical vision? Of course, several successful measures have been adopted in the progressive countries of Europe, America and Japan for the purpose of preventing and curing blindness, thus making it possible for the prospective victims of darkness to remain sensitive to physical light. In India, some attempts have also been made in this direction. But what will happen to those who needed these preventive and curative measures very badly, but could not reach them at all or failed to reach them in time? In the history of mankind, there have always been quite a few persons, their number amounting to millions, who spent their lives without seeing those phenomena of life and nature, which the sighted individuals value so much and consider as the greatest compensations for living on this miserable earth.

It has been estimated that the total number of the blind in the whole world is about six millions. Obviously enough, some portion of this vast amount of blindness is preventable. However, an irreducible minimum will soon be reached and we will be shocked to find that this minimum also counts in terms of millions!

About one-sixth of the total incidence of blindness in the world exists in India, and we have over ten lakhs of our brothers and sisters who are without sight. We may not be able to restore physical light to their insensate and sightless eyes, but shall we allow them to continue their physically dark journey of life in mental darkness as well? Many will ask in honest bewilderment, "What can they do? What can be done for them? They are so unfortunate as to have lost the greatest and the most precious gift of God—Sight!" Even then, a good deal can be done to alleviate the miseries of their blindness and those who claim to possess the greatest and most precious gift of God, have the unique duty and privilege to undertake this noble task for their sightless fellow-beings.

A very brief discussion of what is being done abroad in order to remove the mental darkness of sightless persons, may be undertaken here.

Blind persons have been divided into three groups for the purpose of education and training:—

(1) *Education of Pre-School Children*

Several nursery schools have been established in every country, where blind babies between the ages of two and six are received for education and training. Here they are taught not only the preliminaries of the three "R's", but also fearless movements of the body and certain manners which the sighted children learn unconsciously by imitating others. I had the privilege of visiting some of these nursery schools and of observing the excellent work carried on there.

(2) *Education of Blind Boys and Girls*

In most of the countries I visited, the education of blind boys and girls has been made free and compulsory through legislative enactments. Most of the educable blind children are, therefore, in schools and are preparing themselves for their future vocations.

The education of blind children in ordinary schools for the seeing is a very interesting movement and has been taken up very earnestly in many countries, especially in the United States of America. As a matter of fact, more visually handicapped boys and girls are studying in ordinary day-schools than in special institutions in America. There are many advantages—social, psychological and financial—to be derived from this type of co-education.

(3) *The Training and Employment of the Adult Blind*

For those who have finished their school-education and also for those who have lost their eyesight during the later years of their lives, several centres have been established. These are engaged in imparting suitable training to them and in securing positions for them at the end of their training. The problems of employing blind persons side by side with the sighted is more or less acute in every country. But the problem has been tackled very efficiently in the Western countries and in Japan. It has been realised that there is hardly any sense in giving education and training to blind persons

unless they can earn their livelihood and live as self-respecting citizens.

Turning to India, we find that the condition of the blind belonging to any age group, is very pitiable indeed. There is no nursery school for blind babies, and the number of blind institutions is hopelessly inadequate for about 50,000 blind boys and girls of school-going age.

In order to cope with these problems efficiently and adequately, a new institution, called "The Lighthouse for the Blind," has been brought into existence. At present, it has taken up the problems of mainly the adult blind. It will devote special attention to the questions regarding the economic security of the blind. This is the only institution in India which has interested itself in the education and training of blind adults. They will also include war-blinded persons, for whom there is no provision for education in our country. *

The adult blind from about 90 per cent. of the total population of the blind in India, and in Bengal their number is about 33,000 out of a total of about 38,000 blind persons. Something has to be done for such a vast number of human beings. We need the moral and financial support of all in our efforts to improve their lot through education and employment.

* See the second footnote to the speech entitled, "How the Blind can help War efforts and how we can help the War-Blinded," included elsewhere in this book, in which the information about the establishment of St. Dunstan's in India in July, 1943, has been given.

Milton has rightly said:

"It is not so wretched to be blind; but it is wretched to be incapable of bearing the miseries of blindness."

We invite all to help in relieving these miseries of blindness.

প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক অন্ধদের সমস্যা *

(১৯৪১ সালের ১৩ই জুলাই কলিকাতা বেতার কেন্দ্র হইতে প্রদত্ত বক্তৃতা)

কয়েক মাস আগে আপনাদের কাছে অল্পবয়স্ক অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েদের শিক্ষা সম্বন্ধে কিছু ব'লেছি। দৃষ্টিহীনদের মধ্যে যারা প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক, তাদের শিক্ষা ও জীবনের সমস্যা সম্বন্ধে আজ কয়েকটি কথা ব'লব।

আমাদের দেশে প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক অন্ধদের দুঃখময় জীবনযাত্রা অত্যন্ত মর্ম্মস্পর্শী। প্রায় প্রত্যেক প্রদেশেই এদের সংখ্যা সমস্ত দৃষ্টিহীনদের মধ্যে শতকরা নব্বই জন। আশ্চর্য্যের বিষয় এই যে, এ সত্ত্বেও শিক্ষা ও জীবিকার্জনের উপায় দ্বারা এদের দুরবস্থা এবং দুঃখাবহ একঘেয়ে জীবনযাত্রা দূর করবার কোনও ব্যবস্থাই এ পর্য্যন্ত করা হয়নি। সাধারণতঃ, এ দেশের প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক দৃষ্টিহীনেরা বাড়ীতে (অবশ্য যদি থাকে) সম্পূর্ণ অলসভাবে জীবন যাপন করে এবং তাদের দৃষ্টিহীনতার জন্য বিলাপ করা ও সে জন্য ভগবান ও সমাজকে দায়ী করা ছাড়া তাদের করণীয় আর কিছুই নেই।

পাশ্চাত্য দেশে এদের অবস্থা সম্পূর্ণ বিভিন্ন। গভর্ণমেন্ট ও জনসাধারণের সহযোগিতায় আলোক নিকেতন এবং অন্যান্য প্রকার অনেক শিক্ষাকেন্দ্র স্থাপিত হ'য়েছে। এই সব কেন্দ্রে প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক অন্ধরা নিজ নিজ প্রয়োজন অনুসারে ব্যক্তিগত ভাবে শিক্ষা লাভ করে। অধিকাংশ কার্য্যক্ষম বয়স্ক দৃষ্টিহীন ব্যক্তি যোগ্য কাজে নিযুক্ত হ'য়ে সম্পূর্ণ অথবা আংশিক ভাবে নিজেদের ভরণপোষণ ক'রতে পারে। স্ব স্ব এলাকায় প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক অন্ধদের শিক্ষা এবং জীবিকা অর্জনের জন্য কার্য্যক্রম নিয়ে গ্রেট ব্রিটেনের কাউন্টি পরিষদ সমূহ বিশেষ

* কলিকাতা বেতার কেন্দ্রের সৌজন্যে প্রকাশিত।

বিভাগ খুলেছে। বয়স্ক অন্ধদের সমস্যা আলোচনা ও সমাধান ক'রবার জন্য মার্কিন দেশে প্রত্যেক রাষ্ট্রে ষ্টেট কমিশন ফর দি ব্লাইণ্ড নামে একটি সরকারী বিভাগ আছে। এই উভয় দেশেই অন্ধদিগকে সরকারী আর্থিক সাহায্য দেবার ব্যবস্থা করা হ'য়েছে এবং প্রকৃত কার্য্যক্ষম অন্ধদের থাকবার জন্য বিশেষ আবাস তৈরী হ'য়েছে। ব্রিটিশ পার্লিয়ামেন্টকৃত একটি আইন অনুসারে প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক দৃষ্টিহীন ব্যক্তিরা চল্লিশ বৎসর বয়সেই পেনশন পাবার উপযুক্ত ব'লে বিবেচিত হয়, কিন্তু চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিরা পয়শট্টি বৎসর বয়সের আগে পেনশন প্রাপ্ত হয় না।

গ্রেট ব্রিটেন এবং যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক অন্ধদের সংখ্যা ভারতবর্ষের সংখ্যার চেয়ে অনেক কম। এই অবস্থায় ও উভয় দেশে প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক দৃষ্টিহীনদের জন্য যা করা হ'য়েছে তার সংক্ষিপ্ত বিবরণ থেকেই আমাদের দেশের বয়স্ক অন্ধদের জন্য কি করা উচিত তা বুঝা যায়।

মোটামুটি ব'লতে গেলে ষোল বৎসর এবং ততোধিক বয়স্ক দৃষ্টিহীন ব্যক্তিরাই প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক অন্ধ ব'লে ধরা যেতে পারে। মনস্তত্ত্ব এবং সমাজের সমস্যার দিক দিয়ে প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক অন্ধদের দুটি নির্দ্দিষ্ট শ্রেণীতে ভাগ করা যায়—(ক) যারা জন্মান্ধ অথবা অল্পবয়সেই দৃষ্টিশক্তি হারিয়েছে ; এবং (খ) যারা বেশী বয়সে দৃষ্টিশক্তি হারিয়েছে।

গত ১৯৩১ সালের আদমসুমারি হ'তে জানা যায় যে, বাংলাদেশে ৩৮,০০০ দৃষ্টিহীনদের মধ্যে প্রায় ৩৩,০০০ অন্ধ ব্যক্তির বয়স ষোলর উপরে ; অন্য কথায়, এই প্রদেশে শতকরা ৯০ জন প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক অন্ধ। প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক অন্ধ ব্যক্তিদের এই হার অন্যান্য প্রদেশেও প্রযোজ্য।

কয়েকটি ব্যতীত প্রায় প্রত্যেক প্রদেশেই অল্পবয়স্ক অন্ধ ছেলেমেয়েদের শিক্ষার জন্য সামান্য হ'লেও কিছু ব্যবস্থা করা হ'য়েছে ; কিন্তু দৃষ্টিহীনদের ভেতরে প্রাপ্তবয়স্কদের সংখ্যা এত অধিক হওয়া সত্ত্বেও তাদের জন্য কোনওরূপ ব্যবস্থা করা হয়নি। অধিক বয়সে দৃষ্টিশক্তি হারাবার ফলে যে কিরূপ অসহায় ও দুর্বিষহ অবস্থার সৃষ্টি হয় তা যে কোনও চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিই কল্পনা দ্বারা অনুভব ক'রতে পারেন। এই দুর্দ্দৈবের পর তাকে পরিবার, বন্ধুবান্ধব এবং আত্মীয়স্বজনের সাথে মানসিক দিক থেকে খাপ খাইয়ে নেবার সমস্যা ব্যতীত নিজের জীবিকা নির্ব্বাহ এবং কোনও প্রকার কার্য্যে ব্যাপৃত থেকে জীবনের অবসন্নতা এবং অলসতা দূর ক'রবার সমস্যারও সম্মুখীন হ'তে হয়। যাতে এই সব হতভাগ্য ফলপ্রসূ কার্য্যের উপযুক্ত হ'তে পারে, সেরূপ শিক্ষা দেবার কোনও ব্যবস্থাই আমাদের দেশে নেই। ফলে তারা ভিক্ষাজীবীদের সংখ্যা বৃদ্ধি করে অথবা

বন্ধুবান্ধব বা আত্মীয়স্বজনের গলগ্রহ হয়ে হীন এবং দুঃখময় জীবন যাপন করে।

এখানে একটি প্রশ্ন উঠতে পারে যে, যখন এ দেশে লক্ষ লক্ষ চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিই শিক্ষা পায় না তখন কয়েক সহস্র অন্ধ ব্যক্তির শিক্ষার সুযোগ না থাকায় আক্ষেপের কারণ কি? এর উত্তর হচ্ছে এই যে, এত লক্ষ লক্ষ নরনারীর শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা ক'রতে না পারা যে কোনও দেশের পক্ষেই অত্যন্ত লজ্জার বিষয়। যাহ'ক, আমরা বিশ্বাস করি যে, দৃষ্টিহীন ব্যক্তিদের শিক্ষার প্রয়োজনীয়তা চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিদের চেয়েও বেশী। এই যুক্তির পক্ষে দুটি বিশেষ উল্লেখযোগ্য কারণ আছে।

প্রথমতঃ, সুব্যবস্থিত এবং কয়েক বৎসর স্থায়ী শিক্ষা ব্যতীত অন্ধ ব্যক্তিদিগকে কোনও কার্য্যে নিয়োজিত করা যায় না; অন্য পক্ষে, বহুকালস্থায়ী শিক্ষা ব্যতিরেকেই চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিদিগকে নানাবিধ কার্য্যে নিযুক্ত করা যেতে পারে। এই সব কাজের পক্ষে কেবলমাত্র কিছু সাধারণ জ্ঞান ও দৃষ্টিশক্তি থাকলেই যথেষ্ট।

দ্বিতীয়তঃ, চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিরা যথেচ্ছভাবে চলাফেরা ক'রতে এবং নানা রকম কাজ নিয়ে সময় কাটাতে পারে। দৃষ্টিহীন ব্যক্তিদের লেখাপড়া বা কোন রকম বৃত্তি না শেখালে তাদের জীবন অত্যন্ত নিরানন্দময় ও একঘেয়ে হ'য়ে পড়ে। জগদ্বিখ্যাত অন্ধ-মূক-বধির বিদুষী হেলেন কেলার যথার্থই ব'লেছেন, "অন্ধদের সবচেয়ে দুঃখের কারণ অলসতা, দৃষ্টিহীনতা নয়।"

এখানে আর এক বিশেষ শ্রেণীর প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক নরনারীর শিক্ষার কথা উল্লেখ করা প্রয়োজন। আমি তাদের কথা বলছি যারা যুদ্ধে গিয়ে দৃষ্টিশক্তি হারায়। এই সমস্ত ব্যক্তি যখন যুদ্ধক্ষেত্র হ'তে নিজ নিজ ঘরে ফিরে আসে তখন তাদের শিক্ষালাভ এবং জীবিকানির্ব্বাহ করা একটা বিশেষ সমস্যা হয়ে দাঁড়ায়। এই সমস্ত সমস্যা সমাধান করবার জন্য স্যার আর্থার পিয়ার্সন দৃষ্টিশক্তিহীন অবস্থাতেও সেন্ট ডানস্টান নামে একটি প্রতিষ্ঠান লণ্ডনে স্থাপন করেন। বর্ত্তমানে ভারতবর্ষ ব্যতীত* সমস্ত ব্রিটিশ সাম্রাজ্যের অন্যান্য অংশে ইহার শাখা আছে। হাউস অব কমন্সের অন্ধ সদস্য এবং লণ্ডনের সেন্ট ডানস্টানের বর্ত্তমান পরিচালক স্যার আয়ান ফ্রেজারের সাথে দেখা ক'রে এই সব অন্ধ ব্যক্তির সমস্যা সমূহ আলোচনা করবার সৌভাগ্য আমার হ'য়েছিল। যে সকল ব্যক্তি যুদ্ধের দরুন অন্ধ হ'য়েছে তাদের সমস্যা সমাধানে ব্যাপৃত প্যারিসের প্রতিষ্ঠানটি আমার দেখবার সুযোগ হ'য়েছিল।

* ১৯৪৩ সালে সেন্ট ডানস্টানের একটি শাখা দেরাদুনে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হ'য়েছে।

আমাদের দেশেও এ সম্বন্ধে অনেক কিছু ক'রবার আছে। ইহা নিশ্চয়ই ন্যায়সঙ্গত যে, যে সমস্ত ব্যক্তি ব্রিটিশ সাম্রাজ্য রক্ষা ক'রবার জন্য দৃষ্টিশক্তি হারিয়েছে বা হারাবে, শিক্ষা ও জীবিকার্জনদ্বারা অন্যান্য ব্যক্তির ন্যায় আত্মমর্য্যাদার সঙ্গে বাস ক'রবার সুযোগ তাদেরও দেওয়া উচিত।

অন্ধ নরনারীর বিদ্যাশিক্ষার সফলতা বহুলপরিমাণে ব্রেল-মুদ্রিত পাঠ্য-পুস্তকাদি পাওয়ার উপর নির্ভর করে। বিদেশ হতে বহুল পুস্তক এবং পত্রিকাদি কিনে আনা খুব ব্যয়সাধ্য। তা ছাড়া, বিদেশ হতে ভারতীয় ভাষায় ব্রেল সাহিত্য সংগ্রহ করা মোটেই সম্ভবপর নয়। সুতরাং পর্য্যাপ্ত সংখ্যক পুস্তক এবং সাময়িক পত্রিকাদি ব্রেলে পেতে হলে ব্রেল মুদ্রাযন্ত্র স্থাপন করা ছাড়া অন্য কোনও দ্বিতীয় পন্থা নেই। ভবিষ্যৎ দৃষ্টি নিয়ে দেখলে বিদেশ হ'তে বই কিনে আনা অপেক্ষা একটি ব্রেল মুদ্রাযন্ত্র স্থাপন ক'রলে ব্যয় খুব সংক্ষেপ হয়। এ দেশের অন্ধ শিক্ষাব্রতী এবং কর্ম্মিগণ বহু দিন হ'তে এরূপ একটি মুদ্রাযন্ত্রের প্রয়োজনীয়তা তীব্রভাবে অনুভব ক'রেছেন। ইহা বড় দুঃখের বিষয় যে, এখনও এ দেশের অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়ে ছেলেমেয়েদের নিজেদের হাতে পাঠ্যপুস্তক লিখে পড়াশুনা ক'রতে হ'চ্ছে। এই ব্যবস্থায় ছেলেমেয়েদের প্রভূত পরিশ্রম ও সময় বৃথা নষ্ট হয়। যদি আমরা একটি ব্রেল মুদ্রাযন্ত্র স্থাপন ক'রতে পারি এবং দেশের সমস্ত অন্ধ বিদ্যালয়ের পাঠ্যপুস্তকসমূহ মুদ্রিত ক'রতে পারি তাহ'লে ছেলেমেয়েদের শিক্ষা দেবার ব্যবস্থা বর্ত্তমান ব্যবস্থা হ'তে অধিকতর আনন্দদায়ক হ'য়ে উঠবে।

প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক অন্ধদের জন্য সাহিত্য এবং বিজ্ঞানসম্বন্ধীয় পুস্তকাদি মুদ্রিত ক'রতে হ'লেও ব্রেল মুদ্রাযন্ত্র একান্ত অপরিহার্য্য। ব্রেল-মুদ্রিত বই না পেলে বয়স্ক অন্ধদের নিজ হাতে বিশেষ প্রয়োজনীয় পুস্তকসমূহ লিখে নিতে হবে। স্পষ্টতঃই বুঝা যায় যে এই উপায়ে (অর্থাৎ হাতে) পর্য্যাপ্ত সংখ্যক বই লেখা যায় না। সুতরাং বইয়ের অভাবে প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক দৃষ্টিহীনরা ব্রেল লিখতে ও প'ড়তে বিশেষ আগ্রহশীল হবে না। এখানে উল্লেখ করা যেতে পারে যে, সাধারণ উপায়ে লেখাপড়া করার চেয়ে ব্রেলে লিখবার ও পড়বার রীতি মন্থর ও বিরক্তিকর। এর উপরে যদি নিজেদের হাতে বই লিখে নিয়ে প'ড়তে হয় তাহলে শিক্ষা লাভ করা তাদের পক্ষে আরও বেশী ক্লেশদায়ক ও অপ্রীতিকর হ'য়ে ওঠে।

অন্যান্য দেশের প্রত্যেক বড় বড় প্রতিষ্ঠানে একটি ক'রে ব্রেল মুদ্রাযন্ত্র আছে। লণ্ডনের ন্যাশান্যাল লাইব্রেরী ফর দি ব্লাইণ্ড নামক প্রতিষ্ঠানে প্রায় চার পাঁচ লক্ষ ব্রেল-মুদ্রিত বই আছে। এই সব বই প'ড়তে ইচ্ছুক দৃষ্টিহীন

ব্যক্তিরা এই পাঠাগার থেকে প্রয়োজনীয় বই বিনা খরচে পেয়ে থাকেন। বিশেষ ক'রে প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক অন্ধদের জন্য ওয়াশিংটনের লাইব্রেরী অফ কংগ্রেস এবং নিউ ইয়র্কের পাব্লিক লাইব্রেরী ফর দি ব্লাইণ্ড নামক দুইটি পাঠাগারে আরও অনেক অধিক পুস্তক আছে। অন্ধ নরনারী এই সমস্ত বই বিনা খরচে ব্যবহার ক'রতে পারে। স্কুল-কলেজের পাঠ্য এবং সাধারণ পুস্তকাদি ব্রেলে মুদ্রিত করবার জন্য যুক্তরাষ্ট্রে আমেরিকান প্রিন্টিং হাউস ফর দি ব্লাইণ্ড নামক প্রতিষ্ঠান ব্রেল বই ছাপবার জন্য প্রতি বৎসর সাত লক্ষের বেশী টাকা খরচ করে।

প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক দৃষ্টিহীনদের আলোচনা প্রসঙ্গে আমি আর এক শ্রেণীর ব্যক্তিদের কথা উল্লেখ ক'রছি যাদের জীবন আরও বেশী দুঃখময়। এই সব ব্যক্তি একাধারে দৃষ্টিশক্তি, শ্রবণশক্তি এবং বাকশক্তিহীন। শুনেই হয়ত আপনারা ভাববেন যে, এদের প্রশ্ন আলোচনা ক'রে লাভ কি? এরা ত শিক্ষালাভ ক'রবার সম্পূর্ণ অনুপযুক্ত এবং পৃথিবীতে এমন কোনও কাজ নেই যাতে এদের নিযুক্ত করা যেতে পারে। কিন্তু যাঁরা লরা ব্রিজম্যান, জগদ্বিখ্যাত হেলেন কেলার প্রভৃতির সহিত পরিচিত, তাঁরা অসঙ্কোচে স্বীকার ক'রবেন যে, শিক্ষার সুযোগ পেলে এদের জীবনও গৌরব ও প্রতিষ্ঠায় ভ'রে উঠতে পারে।

আমি যখন দ্বিতীয়বার আমেরিকায় যাই তখন হেলেন কেলারের সঙ্গে দুবার সাক্ষাৎ করার সৌভাগ্য আমার হ'য়েছিল। শ্রবণশক্তি থেকে সম্পূর্ণভাবে বঞ্চিত হ'য়েও শুধু স্পর্শশক্তিদ্বারা রেডিওতে কি অনুষ্ঠান হচ্ছে সেটা তিনি কিরূপ সঠিকভাবে ব'লতে পারেন, তা ভেবে খুব বিস্ময় অনুভব করি। কবিগুরু রবীন্দ্রনাথ নিউ ইয়র্কে তাঁর সঙ্গে সাক্ষাৎ করেন এবং তাঁর অনুরোধে নিজের একটি কবিতা আবৃত্তি ক'রে শোনান। রবীন্দ্রনাথের ঠোঁট স্পর্শ ক'রে হেলেন কেলার কবিতাটির অর্থ অনুধাবন ক'রতে সমর্থ হন।

১৯৩১ সালের আদমসুমারী অনুসারে ভারতবর্ষে ১,০৭২ জন অন্ধ-মূক-বধির আছে এবং বাংলাদেশে তাদের সংখ্যা ১৭৯ জন। এ সব লোকের জন্য শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা করা অত্যন্ত ব্যয়সাধ্য। তথাপি জ্ঞানার্জনের বিশেষ দ্বারগুলো বন্ধ থাকা সত্ত্বেও শিক্ষা ও অনুশীলনদ্বারা এদের মনকে যদি জাগ্রত ক'রে তোলা যায়, তাহ'লে এ অর্থ ব্যয়ের যথেষ্ট সার্থকতা আছে।

ইউরোপ ও আমেরিকাতে গত শতাব্দীর মাঝামাঝি এরূপ শিক্ষার প্রথম প্রবর্ত্তন হয়। এই একশ' বৎসরের মধ্যে এ বিষয়ে যথেষ্ট গবেষণা ও উন্নতি হ'য়েছে। গ্রেট ব্রিটেন ও আমেরিকায় এ সব লোকের প'ড়বার জন্য কয়েকটি

বিভিন্ন রকমের পত্রিকা লেখা হয় এবং আমেরিকায় এদের আনন্দ লাভের জন্য পৃথক রকমের রেডিওও প্রস্তুত করা হয়।

আমাদের দেশেও এদের শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা করা উচিত। এই সব ব্যক্তির এবং প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক দৃষ্টিহীনদের শিক্ষালাভ ও জীবিকার্জনের সুযোগ দেবার উদ্দেশ্যে আমাদের দেশে আলোক নিকেতন ও এই শ্রেণীর নানা প্রতিষ্ঠানের বিশেষ আবশ্যকতা স্বীকার না ক'রে উপায় নাই। যারা অর্থব্যয়ে অক্ষম, তারাও বিনা খরচেই যাতে সে রকম প্রতিষ্ঠানে শিক্ষালাভ ক'রতে পারে তার ব্যবস্থাও হওয়া উচিত।

মিল্টন যথার্থই ব'লেছেন, "দৃষ্টিহীন হওয়া ততটা কষ্টের কারণ নয়; অন্ধত্বের দুঃখ বহন ক'রতে না পারাই প্রকৃত অশান্তির কারণ।"

অন্ধত্বের এই দুঃখভার লাঘব ক'রবার জন্য আলোক-নিকেতন প্রভৃতি প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিতান্ত প্রয়োজন। দৃষ্টিহীনদের আলোকলাভের এই তীব্র আকিঞ্চনে দৃষ্টিহীনদের সাড়া কি পাওয়া যাবে না?

AIMS OF THE UNIVERSITY COURSE FOR TEACHERS AND WORKERS OF THE BLIND

(Summary of speeches delivered at the B. T. Department of the Scottish Church College, Calcutta, on the 31st July, 1941, and at the David Hare Training College, Calcutta, on the 1st August, 1941.)

One of the greatest defects in blind education in India is the absence of a sufficient number of trained teachers and workers for the blind. The number of such trained persons is indeed so very small that most of the blind institutions in this country carry on their work with people who are quite innocent of the methods employed in the education of the blind and of the psychological problems

arising out of blindness. The inevitable result is that the blind educants receive a very poor training which prevents them from taking their right places in society.

In order to remove this shortcoming, a course for the purpose of training the intending teachers and workers for the blind was adopted at the Teachers' Training Department of the Calcutta University in 1940. There were 41 students attending this course, out of whom 25 took the final examination. It is very gratifying to note that most of the candidates learnt Braille and the theoretical portion of the subject * thoroughly.

In addition to this purpose of supplying teachers for blind institutions, the course in question has three other objectives:

First, *to train a large number of teachers for ordinary schools where the sightless boys and girls may be admitted.* It has been realised by several educators of the blind in the Western countries, particularly in the United States, that it is better for the blind children to be educated with the seeing in the same school than with those who are similarly handicapped, residing in special institutions. This type of co-education † of the blind and the seeing is based on several sound reasons—social, psychological and financial. The financial reason is the most pre-

* For details of this subject, *vide* "Education of the Visually Handicapped" and "Calcutta University Course for Teachers and Workers of the Blind," incorporated elsewhere in this book.

† For details of this co-education, *vide* the article "Co-Education of Blind and Seeing Children," incorporated elsewhere in this book.

dominant in a poor country like India where it is immensely difficult to collect funds for the purpose of founding special institutions for the blind.

Secondly, *to help the students to understand general education and general psychology more effectively by acquainting them with a special type of education and educational psychology.* It is quite obvious that the study of a special system of education will develop a comparative ability in a student and he will be in a position to gain new ideas and associations from the works on general education as a result of this comparative ability.

Lastly, *to secure a large number of persons for social service in general welfare work for the blind.* India is a vast country with a large incidence of blindness, specially among the poorer classes. There is, therefore, an urgent need of voluntary service for these persons. It is hoped that those trained in blind education at the Calcutta University, will be able to help and inspire their sightless fellow-beings in towns and villages in their spare time and on a voluntary basis.

In view of these important objectives of this new course at the Calcutta University, it is believed that many will study it eagerly.

It may be stated as a historical retrospect that the movement of training teachers and workers for the blind was started in Great Britain a long time ago. The College of Teachers, London, has arrangements for lectures on the education of the blind, for holding examinations in this subject and for issuing diplomas to the successful candidates. In Great Britain, the Board of Education and the County Coun-

-cils stop their grants to the blind institutions employing untrained teachers.

In America, the course for training teachers and workers for the blind was adopted in 1920 by the Perkins Institution for the Blind. Since then, the movement has gained enormous strength, and at least six American Universities, including the well-known Columbia and Harvard Universities, have initiated this course. Persons from all over the world flock to these American Universities in order to secure this specialised training, and they are encouraged to do so through stipends and scholarships awarded by these educational institutions.

In India, the Calcutta University is, so far, the only University which has taken this important step to promote the cause of blind education in this country.

INAUGURATION OF THE ALL-INDIA LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND

(Summary of a speech * delivered at the inaugural function of the All-India Lighthouse for the Blind, held at 133, Dharamtola Street, Calcutta, on

* Published in the *Statesman*, Calcutta, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, and *Calcutta Municipal Gazette*, Calcutta (all on the 2nd August, 1941); *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta and *Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta (both on the 3rd August, 1941).

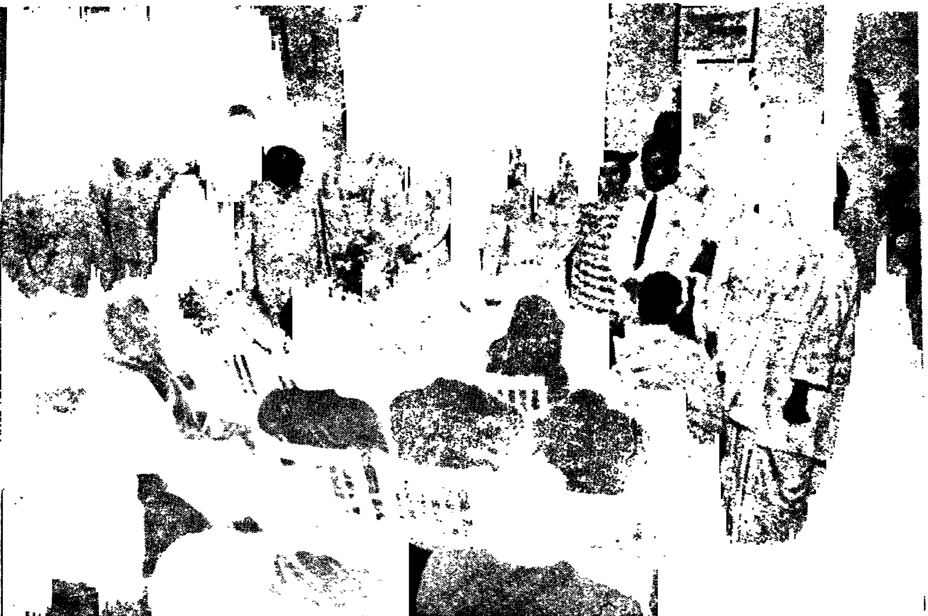
the 1st August, 1941, under the Chairmanship of Rt. Hon'ble Aroon Koomar Baron Sinha of Raipur.)

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

To-day is a great day for us as the institution, for the establishment of which I, personally, have been striving for the last nine months and our Committee has been interested for the last four months, has just been declared open. This is going to be the second institution for the blind in this province. However, the outlook, and the aims and objects of this new welfare centre are completely different from those of the first institution in Bengal as well as from those of any existing institution in this country.

In the first place, this institution intends to function as a central clearing-house for the visually handicapped all over India. Its activities* as the central clearing-house will be to print books and journals in Braille for the use of blind persons and blind institutions all over the country; to carry on publicity on behalf of the blind; to try to solve the employment problems of the blind at the end of their training and education; to aid in enacting legislations providing relief and compensatory privileges for the blind; to serve as a central bureau of information regarding statistics and registration of the blind, and agencies for the blind in India and abroad; and to help the cause of the blind in this country in several other ways.

* For details of the contemplated activities of this institution, *vide* the article "Lighthouse for the Blind in India," incorporated elsewhere in this book.



INAUGURAL FUNCTION OF THE ALL-INDIA LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND IN 1941, HELD UNDER THE

In the second place, so far as education is concerned, this institution is mainly interested in the training of the adult blind. It is unfortunate that very little has been done for the blind adults who constitute almost 90% of the total blind population in this country. Our institution is open to the adult blind coming from all parts of India without any restriction of sex, race or creed.

It is, therefore, quite obvious that this institution has no rivalry with the existing ones as it intends to undertake the work which was neglected so long.

However, the success of our endeavour depends on the co-operation and financial support from the Government and the public. We appeal to all for assistance in developing this institution, formally opened to-day, but which should really have been established a long time ago. Milton has rightly said :

" It is not so wretched to be blind; but it is indeed very wretched to be incapable of bearing the miseries of blindness."

Our institution is intended to do exactly this—to make blind persons capable of bearing the miseries of blindness by turning them into social assets through education and gainful employment. I feel sure that you will not hesitate to help us in this noble task.

You may enquire about your personal benefit in helping our cause. Well, Emerson has already answered this enquiry for me. He has said beautifully :

"Happiness is a perfume which you cannot pour on others without getting a few drops on yourself."

Let us, therefore, earn our share of happiness by making the blind in this country happy and socially useful—and our institution wants to do just this.

ON THE PASSING AWAY OF POET TAGORE *

(Summary of a speech delivered at the condolence meeting, held at the All-India Lighthouse for the Blind, 133, Dharamtola Street, Calcutta, on the 8th August, 1941.)

MEMBERS OF THE STAFF, AND STUDENTS,

We have assembled to-day to mourn the death of a person who was one of the greatest personalities not only in India, but in the whole of the world. Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore passed away yesterday and the whole country is immersed in uncontrollable grief over his death. A day will, of course, come when this grief will be subdued, but we, particularly the Bengalees, will keenly feel his loss so long as the Bengali literature will endure. He has enriched our intellectual and emotional life and made Bengal and the Bengali language well-known to all the civilized lands beyond India. It seems to me that our life would have lost a good deal of its zest

* Published in *Krishak*, Calcutta, 13th August, 1941, and *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 16th August, 1941.

and meaning if we did not have his immortal works to read and his wonderful songs to sing.

Like everybody else, we mourn this great loss. But the blind in Bengal as well as in the whole of India have another cause for sorrow. When I met the poet in 1938,* he very kindly undertook, at my request, to write a fiction or a play, depicting a blind person as a hero or a heroine. The true life of a successful blind person has, so far as I am aware, not yet been featured in the form of a story or a drama in the Bengali language. Poet Tagore's promised book on the subject would have been a very valuable contribution to the welfare work for the blind in this country, and would have rendered a unique service to bring about a better psychological understanding between the seeing and the sightless. His continued ill-health prevented him from undertaking the task, and, now, his pen has lost its motion for ever.

Let us not finish our duty towards the poet just by mourning his death and by praying for the peace of his departed soul. The best way we can discharge our debt of gratitude to him is by practising some of the countless noble ideals which he preached through his writings.

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* For details of my discussion with Poet Tagore, *vide* the article, "Interview with Poet Tagore," incorporated elsewhere in this book.

THROUGH BLIND EYES *

(Summary of a speech delivered at the Friday Club, held at the Y. W. C. A., Calcutta, on the 29th August, 1941.)

There are four principal defects in the education and welfare work for the blind in India:

1. The majority of the teachers and workers for the blind are not properly trained for their tasks. Some of them have good University education, but no technical experience in the special problems involved in the education and care of the blind, while others have acquired this technical experience without having the necessary basic education. For leaders and administrators of blind work, a harmonious combination of both these qualifications is absolutely indispensible. This truth has been realised in Europe and America, and we find that the heads of the institutions and organisations for the blind in those countries are recipients of high University education, including the Ph.D. Degree, combined with intensive and extensive experience in the problems peculiar to the blind.

2. In India, the blind persons have practically been excluded from work for the blind. Except the blind school in Palamcottah, Madras and the blind institution in Amritasar, Punjab, all the blind schools in this country have, so far as is known, seeing persons as their heads. Not only that, more

* Published in the *Advance*, Calcutta, 31st August, 1941.

than 90 per cent. of the teachers of those schools are persons with sight. This is indeed a very regrettable fact. The blind persons are better fitted to carry on the work for the blind than the seeing, and they should be encouraged to participate more and more in the work concerning their fellow-sufferers In the United States, there is an unwritten law that at least one-third of the staff of a blind institution should be constituted by blind persons. The heads of almost all the State Commissions for the Blind in America are sightless persons. Sir Ian Fraser, the head of St. Dunstan's in London, Mr. Robert Irwin, the Executive Director of the American Foundation for the Blind in New York, Monsieur Paul Guinnot, the Secretary-General of a blind institution in France. Herr Gerstorf, the head of National organisation of the blind in Germany and Mr. Takeo Iwahashi, the head of the Lighthouse for the Blind in Osaka, Japan, are all blind persons. Herr Carl Strehl, the well-known principal of a blind institution in Germany, has rightly said:

"As a rule, the blind child will have more faith in a blind teacher; for in the blind teacher one has a reason to expect a deeper understanding of the psychological problems of the child. His example will usually help to overcome the inferiority complex that is so common with blind children."

3. There is no co-ordination among the different schools and organisations for the blind in India. The result is the feeling on the part of every school that it is the best in the country and that it is contributing the most towards the success of blind persons. As in the West, there should be periodi-

cal conferences among the teachers and workers for the blind and attempts should be made to place the backward institutions in line with the progressive ones. A special journal on work for the blind, on the model of "Outlook for the Blind" in America or the "New Beacon" in Great Britain, can do a great deal in this direction.

4. Lastly, the schools and organisations for the blind in India are not very much interested in the employment problems of their alumni. It is rightly felt in the Western countries and Japan that there is no sense in educating blind persons unless they are provided with suitable employments at the end of their education and training. As a result of constant vigilance over the vocational problems of the blind, the majority of the sightless persons in the Western countries and Japan have become more normalised and socialised than those in India, and they are earning their livelihood as teachers, journalists, lawyers, life insurance agents, steno-typists, workers for the blind, and so on.

The course inaugurated last year at the Teachers' Training Department of the Calcutta University for the purpose of having teachers and workers for the blind and recent establishment of the "Lighthouse for the Blind" in Calcutta, will go a great way to remove the abovementioned shortcomings in the education and welfare work for the blind in India. The persons equipped with the special training at the University will be able to help the blind children and the blind adults in the towns and villages where there is no provision for blind education. The main purpose of the "Lighthouse" for the Blind is to endeavour to solve the

employment problems of the blind and to co-ordinate the work for the blind in this country by holding periodical conferences among workers for the blind and by publishing a journal on blind work.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE BLIND *

(Summary of a speech delivered at the Mahabodhi Society Hall, Calcutta, on the 17th September, 1941, under the Chairmanship of Sir Thomas Lamb, Kt., Managing Director, Begg Dunlop & Co., Ltd., Calcutta.)

In every country, except Egypt, blind persons do not constitute more than a small fraction of one per cent. of the total population. Yet, in every progressive country in Europe and America and also in Japan, the sightless individuals receive a good deal of public attention and public assistance —wholly disproportionate to their numerical strength.

The reasons of this are mainly two: First, inspite of their miscropic minority in society, many blind persons have, through their talent and genius, occupied the rank of the greatest personages in the world. Secondly, blindness in itself enlists the sympathy of the seeing population.

* Published in the *Bombay Chronicle*, Bombay, September, 1941; *Statesman*, Calcutta, 18th September, 1941; *Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta, 21st September, 1941; *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 27th September, 1941; *Bombay Sentinel*, Bombay, 23rd October, 1941; and *Hyderabad Bulletin*, Hyderabad, Deccan, 29th October, 1941.

Among those blind persons who have great achievements to their credit and who have inspired both the seeing and the blind alike, the following should receive conspicuous mention:—

1. Homer, the greatest poet of Greece, the first poet of Europe, and one of the greatest poets of the world, was a blind person. In Greek, the word "Homer" means "Blind man." Homer's "Iliad" and "Odyssey" are two of the best classics that the world has ever known. These two books are replete with such delicate and rich variations of powers of observation that it is hard to believe that Homer was really sightless. His writings have fired many world-famous poets with imagination and inspiration, such as Keats, Shelley, Browning, Longfellow, and others.

2. Didymus of Alexandria was a great blind scholar during the fourth century A.D. Owing to his deep scholarship, he was appointed a professor at the Alexandria University.

3. Milton wrote his greatest books, namely, "Paradise Lost," "Paradise Regained," etc., during his blindness. Inspite of his blindness, coupled with unhappy domestic relationships, Milton achieved a glory for himself which "Posterity will never willingly let die."

4. Nicholas Saunderson was a blind professor of the Cambridge University during the beginning of the 18th century. He taught the theories of Sir Isaac Newton, specially those relative to light and colour.

5. Louis Braille is to be remembered specially by the blind persons all over the world, since it is his invention that has made their reading and writ-

ing possible, and it is used everywhere with local adaptations. He was born in France in 1809, and lost his vision during his childhood owing to an accident. In this particular case, which should be true everywhere, a blind person has led the blind.

6. It was through a shooting accident that Mr. Henry Fawcett became blind when he was about 25 years old. Inspite of this physical handicap, he became the Postmaster-General of Great Britain in 1880. He carried out many reforms in the postal theory and practice. As a member of Parliament, he always took a great interest in matters affecting India, and was, therefore, nicknamed as "India Member." He died in 1884 at the age of 51.

7. Born in Hungary, in 1847, Mr. Pulitzer became blind in his adulthood. Inspite of his blindness, he took an active interest in journalism and became the proprietor of several newspapers in the United States. The award of Pulitzer Prize for distinguished service in journalism, is considered very highly in America. A few years ago, Mr. Gobind Behari Lal, a capable journalist in America, was the first Indian to be selected for the Pulitzer Prize.

8. Like Mr. Pulitzer, Sir Arthur Pearson was a newspaper proprietor and lost his eyesight in his advanced years. He established St. Dunstan's which is doing such wonderful work for the war-blinded soldiers. Sir Ian Fraser, his successor in St. Dunstan's, is also without sight and is carrying on the noble work started by Sir Arthur Pearson.

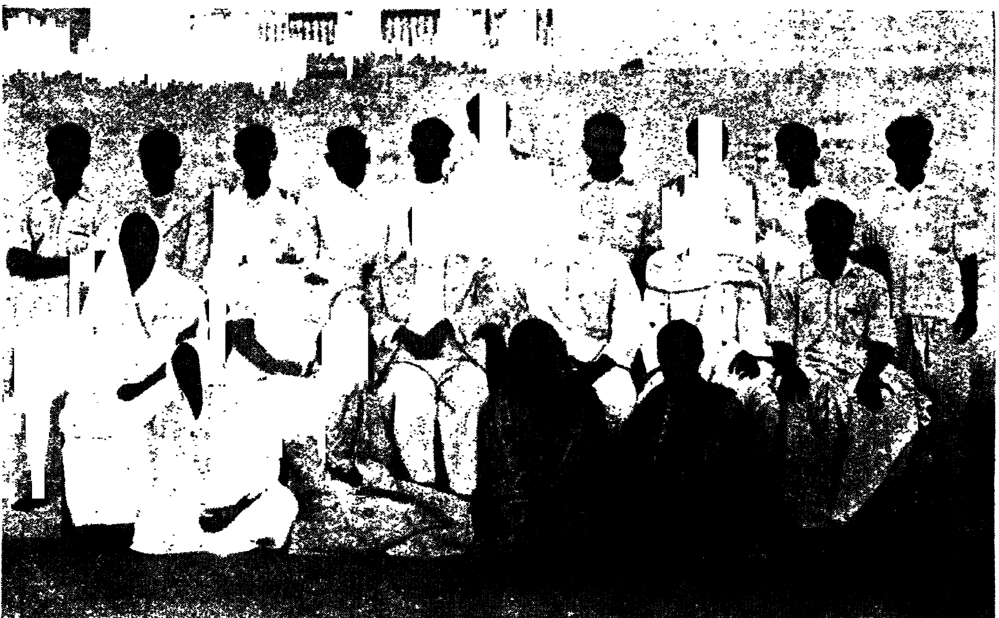
9. Miss Helen Keller, although suffering from three physical handicaps, *viz.*, blindness, deafness and muteness, from the second year of her life, has received the Ph.D. degree from an American and a

British University. She is the author of about a dozen remarkable books, and is considered the eighth wonder of the world.

10. A Japanese blind young man, Mr. Takeo Iwahashi, the founder of the Lighthouse for the Blind in Osaka, Japan, is regarded as the Helen Keller of his country. In spite of his blindness and poverty, he succeeded in receiving his education in Scotland, and is now engaged in relieving the miseries of his fellow-sufferers in Japan.

Apart from these great personalities, the average blind person in the Western countries and in Japan, has achieved a great deal more than his compatriot in India. The reason is that the Government and the public of those countries have taken a lively interest in the cause of their blind population. Besides, several blind persons have become legislators in their own countries and have, thus, been instrumental in passing laws with a view to ameliorating the conditions of their fellow-sufferers.

The Lighthouse for the Blind in Calcutta has been established in order to improve the lot of the blind all over India through education, legislation and employment. It, thus, claims public support in its efforts to make the blind in this country happy and contributing members of society.



Some of the Students and Staff of the All-India Lighthouse for the Blind in 1943

MY MEMORANDUM TO THE UNIFORM BRAILLE CODE COMMITTEE IN INDIA *

(Sent to the Secretary, Central Advisory Board of Education, New Delhi, on the 23rd September, 1941.)

(*i*) What will be the appropriate title of the Braille Code to be approved of by the Committee? The title should be expressive of the intent and scope of the system, and should not be utilised for the purpose of perpetuating someone's name or his achievement. The system is already known by the name of its inventor, and may not be confused by the addition to it of another individual's name.

(*ii*) In the adoption of a uniform type, what will be the guiding factor—ease in learning, symmetry of arrangement or approximation to formulas and practices employed by the seeing? In my humble opinion, the last is to be preferred to all other alternatives inasmuch as nothing which gives rise, in any conceivable way, to the segregation of the blind from the seeing, should be encouraged.

(*iii*) Is it possible or desirable to incorporate contractions and abbreviations in the Code to be adopted? I believe that it is both possible and desirable to do so, and an expert body should be set up to conduct investigations in this important matter.

(*iv*) Lastly, but, by no means, the least, will the arrangement of dots be decided by any *a priori*

* Published in "The Visually Handicapped in India," Page 80, by Dr. R. M. Halder.

theory or by the tactual judgment of the blind? It should be remembered that the Braille type was invented by a blind man for the benefit of persons similarly affected and that, with the blind, actuality and tactuality are almost inseparable. Accordingly, the laying out of an alphabet in embossed characters should be dictated by the tactual perception of the blind and not by any other consideration.

WELFARE WORK FOR THE BLIND IN INDIA *

(Summary of a speech delivered at the New Delhi Townhall, New Delhi, on the 19th November, 1941, under the Chairmanship of Sir Maurice Gwyer, the then Chief Justice of India.)

The problems of welfare work for the blind may be grouped under three broad classes:—(1) Problems of blind children of pre-school stage, *i.e.*, blind children before they are 5 or 6 years old; (2) Problems of blind boys and girls of schoolgoing age, *i.e.*, who are between the ages of 5 and 15; and (3) Problems of blind adults, *i.e.*, who are of 16 years of age and over.

1. In India, the number of pre-school children is about 15,000. However, practicaly nothing has been done for their education and training in our country. The problems of educating such children are very

* Published in the *Nagpur Times*, Nagpur, December, 1941; *Hindu*, Madras, 8th December, 1941; and *Behar Herald*, Patna, 24th February, 1942.

important inasmuch as they cannot learn through visual imitation as the seeing children do. Besides, on account of their lack of vision, the objective stimuli for their response have to be different from those employed with the ordinary children. Institutions on the line of " Sunshine Homes for Blind Babies " in Europe and America should immediately be established in different parts of India for these children.

2. The number of blind boys and girls of school-going age is about 50,000 in India. But only about a thousand of them are receiving education in the different blind institutions in the country. Considering the poverty of the people, it can easily be realised that the parents and guardians cannot afford to send their blind children to special institutions situated far away from their homes and to meet the expenses of a residential institution. The education of the blind should, therefore, be introduced in the ordinary seeing schools as it has been done successfully in Europe and specially in the United States of America. In the latter country, the number of visually handicapped boys and girls in the ordinary seeing schools is much higher than those enrolled at special institution for the blind.

3. The adult blind constitute about 90% of the total blind population in every province—their actual number being about 550,000 in the country, according to the Census Report of 1931. Unfortunately, practically nothing has so far been done for such a vast section of suffering humanity. In the Western countries, there are departments in the central and local governmental units engaged in solving the problems of the adult blind in their particu-

lar areas and there are several legislations towards the amelioration of their miserable conditions.

The All-India Lighthouse for the Blind, established in Calcutta a few months ago, has taken up the problems of the adult blind in India in right earnest. The war-blinded Indians have been classed with the adult blind and arrangements for their suitable training and subsequent employment have also been made at this institution.* The authorities of the intsitution appeal for financial assistance from the generous pubilc all over the country towards the maintenance and expansion of the humanitarian work they have initiated.

THE PLACE OF THE BLIND IN THE WORLD OF THE SEEING †

(Summary of a speech delivered at the Overtoun Hall, Calcutta, on the 11th December, 1941, under the Chairmanship of Mr. D. C. Ghose, Bar-at-Law.)

How blind persons have been treated throughout the ages by a world which has been made for the seeing, is indeed an interesting study.

It cannot be determined definitely whether blindness was more prevalent in the ancient times

* In view of the establishment of a branch of St. Dunstan's at Dehra Dun in July, 1943, the Lighthouse is, at present, working for the civilian blind only.

† Published in the *Calcutta Municipal Gazette*, Calcutta, 20th December, 1941, and *Behar Herald*, Patna, 17th February, 1942.

than in the modern, or, *vice versa.* But, there are evidences of a great incidence of blindness in the ancient and medieval times. In the *Ebers Papyrus,* which was written about the 16th century B.C., twenty eye diseases were recorded. Hyppocrates, the father of scientific medicine in Greece, knew thirty eye diseases.

The principal ways in which blindness was sought to be treated in those days, were by exorcism and magic baths. Until the invention of ophthalmoscope and the introduction of the study of eye anatomy, no scientific treatment of eye diseases was possible.

The social treatment accorded to the sightless persons in the ancient times, was very cruel indeed. According to the laws of Lycurgus in Sparta and Solon in Athens, children blind from birth or from their early years, were exposed on the mountains or in the wilderness to perish. Those who were allowed to live for some reason or other, had a very miserable existence to eke out. Men were mostly beggars and the women had to lead a life of shame.

However, respect for personality and individual worth gradually grew, and laws were framed to put an end to the exposure of sightless children. Ways were also found by which some blind individuals could earn their livelihood.

With the advent of Christianity, steps were taken to provide a systematic care for the blind. Brotherhoods and hospices were established in different parts of Europe, where blind persons were sheltered and fed. The Quinze-Vingts, established in Paris in 1254, was the most well-known of these brotherhoods.

No universal education for the blind, however, was regarded to be possible before Valentin Hauy established the first school for the blind in France in 1784. Gradually, this education spread all over the world and was considerably improved by the various educators of the blind. Louis Braille, himself blind, devised the system through which the blind can read and write.

It is now felt that through the various types of education which have evolved for sightless persons in course of the last two centuries, the blind individuals do not have to remain as economic liabilities to society. In India, the blind are more helpless and economically useless than their compatriots in the progressive countries of Europe, America and Japan.

The All-India Lighthouse for the Blind, established in Calcutta a few months ago, has taken up the task of ameliorating the conditions of the blind all over the country, and it expects all possible help and encouragement from Government and the generous public in this mission.

সাহিত্যে অন্ধ চরিত্র

(সাহিত্য সেবক সমিতির সভায় ১৯৪২ সালের ১লা ফেব্রুয়ারী তারিখে প্রদত্ত বক্তৃতা)*

মাননীয় সভাপতি মহাশয়, ভদ্রমহোদয়া ও মহোদয়গণ,

আপনাদের মত সুপরিচিত সাহিত্যিকগণ আমাদের এই প্রতিষ্ঠানে উপস্থিত হওয়ায় আমরা খুব আনন্দ ও গর্ব্ব অনুভব ক'রছি। এই অন্ধ প্রতিষ্ঠান এবং

* ১৯৪২ সালের ২রা ফেব্রুয়ারী তারিখের "নবযুগে"; ১৯৪২ সালের ১৪ই ফেব্রুয়ারী তারিখের "কলিকাতা মিউনিসিপ্যাল গেজেটে" এবং ১৯৪২ সালের ২রা ফেব্রুয়ারী তারিখের "বাংলার কথা"য় প্রকাশিত।

আমাদের মত দৃষ্টিহীন লোকদের সাহচর্য্য থেকে আপনারা কতটা সাহিত্যিক প্রেরণা পাবেন, তা আমি ব'লতে পারি না ; তবে আপনাদের কাছে "সাহিত্যে অন্ধ চরিত্র"—এই বিষয়ে ২।১টি কথা ব'লব। এ সম্বন্ধে যদি আপনাদের কৌতূহল উদ্রেক ক'রতে পারি, তা হ'লে অন্ধদেরই মঙ্গল হবে।

আমার কলেজ জীবন থেকেই ইংরেজী ও বাংলা সাহিত্যে অন্ধদের চরিত্র কি ভাবে অঙ্কিত করা হ'য়েছে এ সম্বন্ধে বিস্তৃত তথ্য জানবার খুব ঔৎসুক্য হয় এ বিষয়ে যে কয়েকটি দৃষ্টান্ত পাই সেগুলো খুব কৌতূহলের সঙ্গে প'ড়েছিলাম। কিন্তু আমার উৎসাহ দমে গেল যখন দেখলাম যে, বাংলা সাহিত্যে অন্ধ চরিত্র সম্বন্ধে আমি যে কয়েকটি উদাহরণ পেয়েছিলাম সেগুলো মনস্তত্ত্বের দিক থেকে যথার্থরূপে অঙ্কিত হয় নি। বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র শেষ পর্য্যন্ত রজনীর দৃষ্টি ফিরিয়ে দিলেন ; অনুরূপা দেবী ধীরাকে আত্মহত্যা ক'রতে বাধ্য ক'রলেন ; ইত্যাদি। বাংলা সাহিত্যে আমি এপর্য্যন্ত কোন দৃষ্টান্তই পাই নি, যেখানে সুস্থ, সবল এবং সমাজে কৃতকার্য্য হয়েছে—এমন একটিও অন্ধ চরিত্র অঙ্কিত হ'য়েছে। ইংরেজী সাহিত্যে কিন্তু এরকম উদাহরণ পেয়েছি।

বাংলা সাহিত্যে এ বিষয়ে কোন উন্নতি হ'তে পারে কি না সে সম্বন্ধে ১৯৩৮ সালে রবীন্দ্রনাথের সঙ্গে আমার আলোচনা হয়। তাঁর লেখা গল্প "দৃষ্টি দান"ও * যে অন্ধদের মনস্তত্ত্বের দিক থেকে ঠিক হয় নি, তাও আমি তাঁকে জানাই। তিনি খুব মনোযোগ দিয়ে আমার বক্তব্য শোনেন এবং একটি অন্ধ চরিত্রকে প্রধান নায়ক বা নায়িকা ক'রে একটি উপন্যাস লিখতে রাজী হন। কিন্তু তাঁর সঙ্গে সাক্ষাতের পরেই আমি ভারতের বাইরে চলে যাই, এবং তাঁর স্বাস্থ্যও ভেঙে পড়ে। কাজেই তিনি তাঁর প্রতিশ্রুতি রাখতে পারেন নি। এতে এদেশে অন্ধদের যে অত্যন্ত ক্ষতি হ'য়েছে তা বলাই নিষ্প্রয়োজন। তাঁর লেখা একটি সাফল্যমণ্ডিত অন্ধ-চরিত্রের বর্ণনা প'ড়ে চক্ষুষ্মান ব্যক্তিরা অন্ধদের প্রতি তাঁদের গতানুগতিক ধারণা কতকটা বদলাতে পারতেন। এতে অন্ধদের জীবনে প্রচুর কল্যাণ হ'ত।

আজ রবীন্দ্রনাথ আমাদের মধ্যে নেই ; কিন্তু আপনারা তাঁর সমব্যবসায়ী। আপনাদের কাছে আমার বিনীত অনুরোধ এই যে, রবীন্দ্রনাথ যে কাজটা ক'রে যেতে পারেন নি, তার ভার আপনাদের মধ্যে কেউ নিন। এ কাজে যদি আমার

* এ বিষয়ে এই পুস্তকে অন্যত্র প্রকাশিত "Interview with Poet Tagore" নামক প্রবন্ধে বিস্তৃত বিবরণ প্রদত্ত হ'য়েছে।

কোন সহায়তা প্রয়োজন মনে করেন, তা হলে আমি খুব আনন্দের সঙ্গেই আপনাদের সঙ্গে সহযোগিতা ক'রব।

পরিশেষে আজ আমাদের স্কুলে উপস্থিত হবার জন্য আপনাদের সকলকে ধন্যবাদ জানাচ্ছি। আমি সাহিত্যিক হরিপ্রসাদ মল্লিকের নিকট বিশেষ কৃতজ্ঞ, কারণ তাঁর চেষ্টাতেই আজকের এই সম্মিলন সম্ভব হ'য়েছে এবং আপনাদের মত গুণী ব্যক্তিদের সঙ্গে আমার পরিচয় হ'ল।

CO-EDUCATION OF BLIND AND SEEING CHILDREN *

According to the Census Report of 1931, the number of blind persons in India is a little over 600,000. This repersents the largest incidence of blindness recorded in any country, although those working in connection with programmes for the prevention of blindness think that the figure of the sightless individuals in this country is much higher than what has been stated in the 1931 Census Report.

The number of sightless boys and girls, whose educational problems will be discussed in the present article, is about 50,000 in India. They are between the ages of 5 and 15. There are about 40 blind institutions in this country, where about 1,000 blind boys and girls are receiving education. In other words, 49,000 blind children are deprived of the blessings of education owing to the lack of facilities.

A question may be raised at this stage: There are so many millions of sighted children in this

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country who are going without education; why should, then, an issue be made about the lack of educational opportunities for a few thousand children without sight? To this the answer is that it is highly regrettable for any country not to be able to make provision for the education of so many millions of her children. However, we believe that sightless children have a more urgent need for education than even the seeing. There are mainly two reasons in support of this thesis:

First, the blind persons cannot be employed in any work without receiving a systematic training and education extending over several years, while there are various spheres of activity for the seeing individuals in which they may be employed without such protracted training and education. In those activities, the mere possession of sight, combined with some amount of common sense, is all that is needed to qualify a person for employment.

Secondly, the seeing people are able to move about freely and have several interests to keep themselves busy with. But the sightless individuals have to carry on a dreary and monotonous existence, and have a feeling of hopelessness and aloneness in the world if they are not taught some art or craft which will keep them occupied and make them feel that time, after all, moves. Helen Keller, the world-famous blind-deaf-mute scholar, has rightly remarked, *The heaviest burden on the blind is not blindness, but idleness.*

The main problem, then, is how to extend facilities for the education of our blind children. This can easily be done if we adopt the new educational philosophy and practice, current in different coun-

tries of Europe and America since the beginning of the present century. This consists of the introduction of the education of blind children in schools for the seeing.

We usually believe that a special residential institution is the only place where blind children can be educated. This was also the belief in Europe and America about half of a century ago. But most of the present educators of the blind in those countries hold that it is better for the blind children to be educated with their seeing compatriots in ordinary schools than in special institutions where their association is confined only to those having the similar physical handicap.

Admitting for the sake of argument that residential institutions are better suited to the needs of sightless children, we shall have to have a good deal of funds for the purpose of establishing new institutions throughout the country. It is, however, apparent to all that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to collect the necessary funds to build a sufficient number of institutions to meet the demands of 50,000 blind children.

The day-school for the blind does not, however, involve much expense to the parents and guardians of children without sight. Blind boys and girls attend the ordinary schools in their localities with their sighted brothers and sisters and pay the usual tuition fee. They receive lessons in the same class with other pupils. On the teaching staff there is one who is especially trained in the education and psychology of the blind. He spends some time every day with the blind children of his school and helps them in their peculiar difficulties. Otherwise, there

is no distinction between the blind and the seeing children in an ordinary school.

Apart from a few isolated instances of some blind pupils having successfully prosecuted their studies with their seeing class-mates in ordinary schools, the idea of this kind of co-education is rather an innovation in the educational philosophy in our country. In the Western countries, however, especially in the United States of America, this idea was, as stated before, carried into practice about half a century ago. As early as 1851, Samuel Gridley Howe, the first Director of the Perkins Institution for the Blind, one of the three leading blind schools in the United States, stressed the various advantages derivable from the co-education of the blind and the sighted children in ordinary schools. Since the execution of this idea in actual practice in 1900, this movement in America has become so popular to the parents and guardians of visually handicapped children and to the children themselves that, according to an educational survey in 1936, there were more blind and partially-sighted boys and girls studying in ordinary schools than those enrolled at residential institutions for the blind —the recorded number being 7,251 in ordinary schools and 5,851 in special institutions. A particular note should be taken of the fact that, although the first residential school for the blind in America was established 68 years before this amalgamated education took a practical shape, yet, in course of only 36 years, the ordinary seeing schools served the educational needs of a larger number of visually handicapped boys and girls than the institutions for the blind, of which there are over 60 in the United

States! In New York city alone, four schools for the seeing have introduced the education of the blind inspite of the existence of two residential institutions for the blind in that city.

There must be very good reasons for the phenomenal growth of this particular variety of co-education in America. In view of the limitation of space, only six of these reasons will be stated here:

1. "The principle of the day-school is nothing but the manifestation of the scientific conviction, found in evidence in more than one field of education and of child welfare to-day, that institutional life for children should be reduced to its lowest possible limits. It results from a general belief that the institution is more or less out of place in modern conceptions of the treatment of the child, and is to be accepted only in the absence of anything better." Frank H. Hall, one of the most notable educationists of the blind in America, believed firmly that *the institutionalisation of blind children constitutes a handicap in later life even more serious than the lack of vision.* As a result of this institutionalisation, a blind child is made to feel dependent upon the rest of society and is led to believe that the world owes him a living. Such an attitude chills personal efforts and ambition and causes blindness to be associated with social parasitism in the minds of the seeing people. Besides, living constantly with children similarly afflicted, blind children, in many cases, cannot develop normal personalities. At the end of this segregation from society for several years, they find it very difficult to adjust themselves psychologically to the seeing world. The proposed co-education is free from these shortcomings.

2. The parents and guardians are more familiar with ordinary schools than with special institutions, and they prefer to send their blind children to the seeing schools if special provisions exist. Institutions are usually looked upon with suspicion by them.

3. According to modern principles of educational psychology, an institution can never take the place of home. Due to long residence in a special institution, a blind child's attitude towards home and the members of his family undergoes a considerable change. The parents themselves come to think in course of time that there is another agency to take care of their blind child, and, thus, do not discharge their parental obligations to the extent they should. "The home contacts give the blind child an appreciative understanding of the economic problems of the home, and urge him to make an effort towards self-support."

4. The standard of education in the special institutions is very often inferior to that obtainable in ordinary seeing schools. Dr. Merry, one of the American authorities on blind education, has rightly remarked:

"It should be pointed out that on the whole day-school classes for blind children are not so prone to adhere to outworn theories and methods as are residential institutions. The fact that these classes are a recognised part of the public school systems of cities where they are located, tends to bring them in line with the best current educational practices for seeing children."

5. If blind children attend ordinary schools, the seeing people get a better opportunity to be

conversant with the needs and problems arising out of their deprivation of vision. Besides, the sighted and the sightless children learn to understand each other from their early association in their school life, and the questions of superiority or inferiority complex can hardly arise.

6. Lastly, the maintenance cost in a day-school is about 50% less than in special institutions. Having regard to our present economic conditions, this financial argument should be most telling. The parents and guardians are usually too poor to send their sightless children and wards to the existing institutions situated far away from their homes and to meet the expense necessary for education in residential institutions. Why cannot these children stay in their own homes and receive education in the ordinary schools of their locality? Of course, they can, and this is the only way in which these perplexing educational problems of so many thousands of sightless boys and girls in our country can be solved without much expense to parents and guardians.

WAR-BLINDEDNESS *

(A Letter)

With the advent of the Second World War, the questions regarding war-blinded persons have captured the attention of workers for the blind all over the world Owing to the development of techniques

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of modern warfare, it is not only those fighting in the actual battlefield who are likely to lose their sight, but the civilian population also has the risk of such a grave possibility.

In order to solve the problems of war-blinded persons in Great Britain, Sir Arthur Pearson founded St. Dunstan's Institution in London. In course of time, branches of his humanitarian institution were established in different parts of the British Empire. India has been very much behind in this type of work, and practically nothing has been done towards the welfare work for war-blinded Indians.* Although these persons may be admitted to St. Dunstan's in London and receive their training and education there, yet, as a rule, it is not obviously possible for them to do so. Sir Ian Fraser, the Chairman of St. Dunstan's in London, told the writer, when the latter visited that institution, that there was no war-blinded Indian under training there.

The realisation of the needs and sufferings of war-blinded persons in this country led the authorities of the All-India Lighthouse for the Blind to include this phase of work into the aims and objects of this institution from the very outset. It intends to function as St. Dunstan's of the East and is open to all persons—soldiers or civilians—blinded as a result of war, without any restriction of sect, creed or colour. Since this institution is primarily in-

* See the second foot-note to the article entitled 'How Blind can Help War Efforts and How we can Help the War-Blinded," included elsewhere in this book, in which the information about the establishment of the St. Dunstan's Institution in India in July, 1943, has been given.

tended for blind adults in India, it can easily handle the problems of war-blinded persons who constitute a section of the adult blind population.

The writer had an occasion to visit and study the work for war-blinded persons in various countries of Europe, the United States and Canada, and was impressed with the improved conditions in the lives of these persons as a result of collective human efforts. He invites the public in general, and ex-service associations and other organisations interested in ex-servicemen in particular, to co-operate with the All-India Lighthouse for the Blind in its efforts to ameliorate the conditions of the war-blinded.*

HOW THE BLIND CAN HELP WAR EFFORTS †

It is usually thought that blind persons are absolutely incapable of aiding the war efforts. On the contrary, they cause a special worry to the authorities at the time of air-raids or other disturbed conditions resulting from war.

This is undoubtedly one of those countless misconceptions so popular with the seeing individuals regarding their sightless fellow-beings. The

* In view of the establishment of a branch of St. Dunstan's at Dehra Dun in July, 1943, the Lighthouse is, at present, working for the civilian blind only.

† Published in the *Statesman*, Calcutta, 18th October, 1942.

blind persons in the European countries and in America are contributing a great deal towards strengthening their national war efforts, and their help has always been solicited and highly appreciated by the authorities concerned.

It may interest the public in India to read an account of how the sightless individuals in America are aiding the war efforts, and the blind in this country may, having the examples of their American compatriots before them, be inspired to wake up and contribute their own share.

First, the blind in America are co-operating with the activities of the American Red Cross. They aid in raising funds for Red - Cross work, volunteer as blood donors, answer telephone calls at Red Cross headquarters, respond to enquiries and relay messages. They also help the Red Cross by rolling bandages for them as well as by sewing and knitting for the troops.

Secondly, they are co-operating with the United States Treasury by buying the Defence Bonds and Defence Stamps, and assisting in selling them.

Thirdly, they are filling certain vacancies caused by the sighted workers who are being drafted for the army. Here is a chance for blind workers not only to release sighted workers for combatant and other services, but also to remove, through the efficient discharge of their duties, the prejudices against blind labour. Sightless workers have already proved ther value in sorting and packing, and particularly in that type of work in which sensitive touch is essential. In 54 sheltered workshops for the blind in the United States, over 2,000 blind persons are working

and supplying Government orders vital to American *security*.

Lastly, they are trying to prevent waste and promote economical food habits in their families. They are also helping in conserving such vitally needed war materials as string, paper, rags, metals, and so on.

In Germany and Italy, blind persons have been trained and employed as detectors of aeroplanes. This they can do by training their power of hearing.

The sightless individuals should be able to aid in certain emergency services. While it is not possible that all blind people can successfully complete full first-aid courses, the capable ones among them are able to do bandaging. They can also be of assistance to the air-raid centres in their particular areas by volunteering their services for telephone duty. They can co-operate with the air-raid wardens regarding the special needs of blind persons.

The most important contribution that the blind people can make towards the war efforts is by helping to maintain morale. Having come through their own personal difficulty with spirit unbroken, they can serve as examples of courage and fortitude to those who are on the point of succumbing to fear, discouragement and grief.

It is quite possible that the sightless community in India can help their national war efforts in many of the ways indicated above. The blind persons should be told about these ways and the authorities should utilise their services. It is wrong to think that the blind do not want, or are unable, to co-operate with seeing. It has rightly been observed by a blind physician:

"So long as the blind can still bring their stone, however small it may be, to the building of civilisation, or bring happiness to their kind, they feel that they live; and, whatever be the wounds received, they are not out of the battle of life—the inequality of arms only increases their ardour."

अन्धोंकी शिक्षा *

कलकत्ता-विश्वविद्यालयकी उदारता और बंगाल-सरकारकी कृपासे मुझे न केवल अमरीकामें जाकर उच्च शिक्षा प्राप्त करनेका सुयोग ही प्राप्त हुआ है; बल्कि यूरोप, अमरीका और जापानमें अन्धोंकी शिक्षा तथा उनकी सामाजिक और अर्थनीतिक स्थिति सुधारनेके लिए होनेवाले प्रयत्नों एवं अन्धोंसे सम्बन्ध रखनेवाली विविध समस्याओंको जानने और समझनेका सुअवसर भी मिला है। वहाँके अन्धे आज समाज अथवा अपने परिवारके लिए भार-स्वरूप नहीं हैं और न ही वे भिक्षा माँगकर अपना उदर-पोषण करते हैं। सरकार और लोकसेवाव्रती संस्थाओंके सहयोगसे वे आज सुशिक्षित एवं स्वावलम्बी होकर जिम्मेदार एवं कर्त्तव्यपरायण नागरिकोंकी तरह जीवन बिताते हैं।

पर दुर्भाग्यवश हमारे देशके अन्धोंकी शिक्षाका कोई समुचित प्रबन्ध नहीं है। इसका प्रधान कारण यद्यपि हमारी राजनीतिक

* Translated from the English original by Mr. M. S. Sengar, Editor, *Vishal Bharat*, and published in *Vishal Bharat*, November, 1942.

गुलामी और अर्थनीतिक हीनता है, तथापि जनताकी उदासीनता भी इसके लिए काफ़ी ज़िम्मेदार है। सरकारकी ओरसे प्रत्येक प्रान्तमें अन्धोंकी शिक्षाके लिए गुंजाइश रखी गई है; पर अमली तौरपर दो-एक प्रान्तोंको छोड़कर उसकी व्यवस्था कहीं भी नहीं है। जनताका न मालूम कितना रुपया प्रतिवर्ष तरह-तरहके राजनीतिक, सामाजिक और धार्मिक कार्योंमें व्यय होता है; पर इस कामके लिए जैसे उसके पास न तो समय है और न धन ही। यही कारण है कि हमारे देशके शिक्षा और स्वावलम्बनसे बंचित अन्धे सिरपर हाथ धरे या तो अपने भाग्य और समाजको कोसते रहते हैं, या भिखारीयोंकी संख्या बढ़ाते हैं। न समाजकी उनके प्रति कोई ज़िम्मेदारी है और न वे ही उसके प्रति अपना कोई कर्त्तव्य महसूस करते हैं।

विदेशोंमें अन्धोंकी शिक्षाकी व्यवस्था

किन्तु पूर्वमें जापानने और पश्चिममें यूरोप तथा अमरीकाने अन्धोंकी शिक्षाके लिए बहुत-कुछ किया है। लोक-संस्थाओं और सरकारके सहयोगसे ब्रिटेन, जापान, यूरोपके अधिकांश देशों और संयुक्त-राष्ट्र अमरीकाके प्रत्येक राज्यमें अन्धोंकी शिक्षा, उनकी सामाजिक एवं आर्थिक स्थिति सुधारने, उनकी चिकित्सा आदिके लिए अनेक सुसंगठित संस्थाएँ हैं। इन देशोंमें अन्धोंकी शिक्षा तीन भागोंमें विभाजित है—(१) जन्मान्ध एवं कुछ वय प्राप्त होनेके बाद अन्धे हुए बालक-बालिकाओंकी पाठशाला जानेसे पहलेकी शिक्षा, (२) प्राथमिक, माध्यमिक एवं उच्च शिक्षा और (३) विशिष्ट वैयक्तिक योग्यता, क्षमता एवं रुचिके अनुसार जीविकोपार्जनके लिए उपयुक्त शिक्षा।

ब्रिटेनकी प्रत्येक ज़िला-कौन्सिलके अधीन एक विभाग है, जो अपने क्षेत्रके अन्धोंकी सुख-सुविधा, शिक्षा और शिक्षित हो

जानपर उन्हें काम दिलानेकी व्यवस्था करता है। ब्रिटिश पार्लमेंटने यह कानून पास किया है कि प्रत्येक अन्धा कर्मचारी ४० वर्षका होनेके बाद पेंशनका हक़दार समझा जाय। (स्मरण रहे, आँखवालोंके लिए यह अवधि ६५ वर्ष है।) जर्मनी, फ्रांस, इटली, कानाडा, रूस आदिने भी इस दिशामें स्तुत्य कार्य किया है।

संयुक्त-राष्ट्र अमरीकाके लगभग प्रत्येक राज्यमें 'राष्ट्रीय अन्ध-कमीशन'का एक कार्यालय है, जिसका काम केवल अन्धोंके आँकड़े एकत्र करना, उनकी सुख-सुविधा, चिकित्सा, शिक्षा और नौकरीकी व्यवस्था करना है। जो अन्धे इस योग्य नहीं होते कि कुछ सीख सकें, या सीखकर कोई काम करके अपना उदर-पोषण कर सकें, उनकी सहायताके लिए इसकी अधीनतामें 'अन्ध-गृह' खोले गए हैं। इनमें रहनेवालोंके भरण-पोषणका भार सरकार और सार्वजनिक संस्थाओंपर होता है।

जापानमें सबसे पहला अन्ध-शिक्षण-केन्द्र श्री ताकेओ इवाहाशी नामक एक उच्च शिक्षा-प्राप्त अन्धे द्वारा स्थापित किया गया था। आप आज भी उसके कार्याध्यक्ष हैं, और आपके तत्त्वावधानमें केन्द्रने बहुत उन्नति एवं साफल्य लाभ किया है। इस ओर जापान-सरकार और जनताने भी काफ़ी ध्यान दिया है। कहना न होगा कि अन्धोंकी शिक्षाके मामलेमें जापान आज पश्चिमसे किसी भी रूपमें पिछड़ा हुआ नहीं है।

भारतीय अन्धोंकी शिक्षण-समस्या

सन् १९३१ की मर्दुमशुमारीके अनुसार (१९४१ में हुई मर्दुमशुमारीमें अन्धोंकी अलग गिनती नहीं की गई) समग्र भारतमें अन्धोंकी संख्या ६००,००० से अधिक है। इनमें से ३७,००० अन्धे अकेले बंगाल-प्रान्तमें हैं। कुल अन्धोंका ८०

प्रतिशत हिस्सा वयस्क है और उन्हींकी शिक्षाकी फ़िक्र हमें करनी चाहिए। बाल्य-कालमें तो वे किसी-न-किसीके अधीन रह ही सकते हैं; किन्तु वय प्राप्त होनेके बाद यावज्जीवन उनका दूसरोंपर निर्भर कर सकना सम्भव नहीं। विदेशोंमें २० वर्ष और उससे ऊपरकी आयुके अन्धे 'वयस्क'-श्रेणीमें परिगणित किए जाते हैं। बंगालमें वयस्क अन्धोंकी संख्या ३०,००० के लगभग है।

वयस्क अन्धोंकी शिक्षाके छोटे-मोटे सरकारी और गैर-सरकारी प्रयत्न एकाधिक प्रान्तोंमें हुए हैं; पर उन्हें पर्याप्त, सुव्यवस्थित और सन्तोषजनक नहीं कहा जा सकता। अन्धे बच्चोंको थोड़ी-बहुत शिक्षा देनेकी ओर कुछ व्यक्तियोंका ध्यान ज़रूर आकृष्ट हुआ है; पर प्रत्येक प्रान्तके बहुसंख्यक वयस्क अन्धोंकी उचित शिक्षाका कोई उल्लेखनीय सामूहिक प्रयत्न अभी तक नहीं हुआ है। इसका परिणाम यह हुआ है कि ये लोग अपने जीवनको बहुत नीरस, निराशामय, अँधेरा और बेकार समझते हैं। कुछ गा-बजाकर अपना पेट भरते हैं और कुछ भिक्षा-वृत्ति द्वारा निकृष्टतम जीवन व्यतीत करते हैं।

इस स्थितिसे एक मोटी बात यह ज़ाहिर होती है कि सर्वसाधारण और हमारी सरकार इस तरफ़से कितने उदासीन हैं! बहुधा मुझे ऐसे लोग मिलते हैं, जो कहते हैं कि जहाँ आँखोंवाले भी हज़ारों-लाखोंकी संख्यामें पढ़-लिखकर बेकार डोल रहे हैं, वहाँ आप अन्धोंको पढ़ा-लिखाकर क्या कीजिएगा? यह सुनकर मुझे ऐसे लोगोंकी बुद्धिपर तरस आता है। इस आपत्तिके जवाबमें मैं केवल दो ही बातें कहना चाहता हूँ। पहली तो यह कि आँखोंवाला आदमी मेहनत-मज़दूरी और हल्का-भारी सभी तरहका काम कर सकता है; पर अन्धा आदमी जो चाहे, वह काम नहीं कर सकता। वह तो केवल कुछ गिने-चुने ख़ास-ख़ास काम ही कर सकता है, और इसीलिए उसे उन कामोंकी शिक्षा और

अनुभव प्राप्त कराना आवश्यक है। दूसरी बात यह है कि आँखोंवाला व्यक्ति चाहे जहाँ आ-जा सकता है और जीविकोपार्जनके साथ-साथ अपना समय बितानेके भी अनेक मार्ग निकाल लेता है; पर अन्धा आदमी यह सब नहीं कर सकता। उसके जीविकोपार्जन, समय बिताने और मनोरंजनके कुछ सीमित साधन और मार्ग ही हैं। इनसे परिचित करानेके लिए उसे शिक्षाकी सर्वोपरि आवश्यकता है। इन्हींके आधारपर मैं ज़ोरोंसे कह सकता हूँ कि आँखोंवालेकी अपेक्षा अन्धेका शिक्षित होना न केवल अधिक आवश्यक ही है, बल्कि अपरिहार्य भी। अन्धेके जीवनकी नीरसता, अकेलेपन और अँधेरेको दूर करनेका एकमात्र उपाय और आधार उसकी शिक्षा ही है।

पर अन्धोंकी शिक्षाके लिए दो-एक प्राथमिक या माध्यमिक शिक्षाके विद्यालय खोल देना-भर ही काफ़ी नहीं है। ऐसे कुछ विद्यालय भारतमें हैं, और उन्होंने अपने-अपने क्षेत्रोंमें प्रशंसनीय कार्य भी किया है; किन्तु केवल इतना करना ही तो अन्धोंकी शिक्षाके लिए पर्याप्त नहीं है। प्रत्येक अन्धेकी पढ़ने-लिखनेकी रुचि हो और वह काफ़ी पढ़-लिख सके, यह आवश्यक नहीं। अतः उनमें से प्रत्येकको उसकी योग्यता, क्षमता और रुचिके अनुसार ही पुस्तकीय अथवा औद्योगिक शिक्षा दी जानी चाहिए।

इस समय जो विश्वव्यापी भीषण संग्राम छिड़ा है, उसने भारतीय अन्धोंकी शिक्षण-समस्याके एक नए पहलूको हमारे सामने ला उपस्थित किया है। यह है युद्धमें अन्धे होनेवाले सैनिकों अथवा नगरिकोंके भविष्यका प्रश्न। युद्धमें अंग-भंग हुए लोग किसी तरह पेंशनकें सहारे अपने शेष जीवनके दिन काट ही लेते हैं; किन्तु अन्धा सैनिक या अफ़सर केवल पेंशनसे ही तो नहीं जी सकता। और अन्धे नागरिकके भविष्यका प्रश्न तो और भी टेढ़ा है, क्योंकि उसे तो पेंशनकी भी आशा नहीं। अतः

इसके लिए विशेष रूपसे अलग प्रयत्न किया जाना आवश्यक है। लन्दनमें मेरी मुलाकात सर आर्थर पियर्सनसे हुई, जो स्वयं अन्धे हैं और जिन्होंने युद्धमें अन्धे हुए व्यक्तियोंकी सेवा एवं शिक्षाके लिए 'सेन्ट डुन्स्टंज़' नामक एक संस्था खोल रखी है। इसकी शाखाएँ समूचे ब्रिटिश साम्राज्यमें (भारतको छोड़कर!) हैं,* जो युद्धमें अन्धे हुए सैनिकोंकी सहायता करती हैं। सेंट डुन्स्टंज़के डाइरेक्टर सर इयान फ्रेज़र नामके एक अन्धे सज्जन हैं, जो कुछ काल तक ब्रिटिश पार्लमेंटके सदस्य भी रह चुके हैं।

अन्ध-शिक्षण-केन्द्रकी स्थापना

विदेशसे लौटनेके बादसे ही मैं यह महसूस कर रहा था कि इन सब समस्याओंके हलके लिए कोई एक ऐसी संस्था खोली जाय, जो भारतीय अन्धोंकी शिक्षा और उनकी स्थिति सुधारनेके लिए सामूहिक प्रयत्नका श्रीगणेश कर सके। मैंने अपनी योजना कुछ उदाराशय सज्जनोंके सामने रखी, जिन्होंने न केवल उसे पसन्द ही किया, बल्कि शीघ्र-से शीघ्र उसे कार्यान्वित करनेका अनुरोध किया और शक्ति-भर पूरा सहयोग देनेका आश्वासन भी दिया। मेरे लिए इससे बढ़कर सुख और सन्तोषकी बात और हो ही क्या सकती थी। फलतः गत वर्ष कलकत्तेमें 'अन्ध-शिक्षण-केन्द्र' (Lighthouse for the Blind) की स्थापना की गई। यह केन्द्र देश-भरके वयस्क अन्धों और युद्धमें अन्धे हुए सैनिकों और नागरिकोंकी सामाजिक, अर्थनीतिक और मनो-

* इन पंक्तियोंके लिखे जानेके बाद देहरादूनमें इसकी भारतीय शाखा खोली गई है, जिसके अध्यक्ष मेजर सर क्लूथा मेकेंजी हैं। अभी हालहीमें प्रकाशित उसकी रिपोर्ट से पता चलता है कि यह शाखा बड़ा लोकोपयोगी कार्य कर रही है।

वैज्ञानिक स्थिति सुधारने तथा उन्हें जीविकोपार्जन करनेके योग्य बनानेके लिए आवश्यक शिक्षाकी व्यवस्था करेगा। यह सारी व्यवस्था पाश्चात्त्य अन्ध-विद्यालयोंके समान वैज्ञानिक ढंगपर की जायगी। अन्धोंको पुस्तकीय, कला एवं औद्योगिक शिक्षा देनेके अलावा इसका कार्य अन्धोंके भावी शिक्षक तैयार करना भी होगा।

ब्रेल-प्रेस, पुस्तकें और पत्र

अन्धोंकी पुस्तकीय शिक्षा बहुत-कुछ पाठ्य तथा अन्यान्य विषयोंकी पुस्तकों और सामयिक पत्रोंपर निर्भर करती है। अन्धों द्वारा स्पर्शसे पढ़ी जानेवाली उभरी हुई बिन्दियोंकी ब्रेल-लिपिमें छपी पुस्तकें और पत्र-पत्रिकाएँ विदेशसे मँगाना एक तो मँहगा बहुत पड़ेगा और दूसरे आजकलकी सामरिक परिस्थितिके कारण उनके आनेमें समय भी बहुत लगेगा। एक तीसरी और सबसे बड़ी कठिनाई इस दिशामें यह भी है कि ब्रेल-लिपिमें छपा सारा साहित्य अंगरेज़ी अथवा अन्य यूरोपीय भाषाओंमें है, जिससे प्रत्येक भारतीय अन्धा छात्र लाभ नहीं उठा सकता। उनसे वह तभी लाभ उठा सकता है, जब कि पहले अंगरेज़ी सीखे। भारतीय भाषओंकी ब्रेल-लिपि तो अभी बनही नहीं पाई है।

जो भी कुछ हो, इस केन्द्रका एक अन्यतम कार्य होगा ब्रेल-प्रेसकी स्थापना। यह विदेशोंसे ब्रेल-लिपिमें छपी पुस्तकें मँगानेकी अपेक्षा सस्ता तो रहेगा ही, साथ ही इसमें भारतके विविध प्रान्तोंकी आवश्यकतानुसार पाठ्य एवं अन्यान्य विषयोंकी पुस्तकें तैयार हो सकेंगी। इसके द्वारा अन्धोंके लिए नवीनतम वैज्ञानिक, साहित्यिक, औद्योगिक और सामयिक साहित्य भी प्रस्तुत किया जा सकेगा। यहाँ यह बतला देना असंगत न होगा कि यूरोप और अमरीकाके जितने प्रमुख अन्ध शिक्षण-

केन्द्रोंका मैंने निरीक्षण किया है, उनमें से प्रत्येकके पास अपना ब्रेल-प्रेस है। इनमें वे अपनी रुचि एवं आवश्यकतानुसार पुस्तकें और पत्र-पत्रिकाएँ छापते हैं। इसी सुविधाके कारण आज उन्होंने अन्धोंके लिए प्रचुर मात्रामें साहित्य प्रस्तुत किया है। लन्दनके 'राष्ट्रीय अन्ध-पुस्तकालय' में ब्रेलमें छपी लगभग ५०,००० पुस्तकें हैं। न्यूयार्ककी कांग्रेस-लाइब्रेरी और पब्लिक-लाइब्रेरीमें इससे भी कहीं अधिक पुस्तकें हैं। कई त्रैमासिक, मासिक, पाक्षिक, साप्ताहिक और अर्द्ध-साप्ताहिक पत्र ब्रेलमें इन संस्थाओं द्वारा प्रकाशित किए जाते हैं। जापानसे तो अन्धोंके लिए ब्रेलमें एक दैनिक पत्र तक निकलता है। अमरीकाके ब्रेल-प्रेसको सरकारकी ओरसे पुस्तकें और पत्रादि छापनेके लिए २२५,००० डालर प्रतिवर्ष दिए जाते हैं।

अन्धों, गूँगों और बहरोंकी शिक्षा

केन्द्रको उन लोगोंकी शिक्षाका भी प्रबन्ध करना होगा, जो अन्धे होनेके साथ ही गूँगे और बहरे भी हैं। १९३१ की मर्दुमशुमारीके अनुसार भारतमें कुल १,०७२ और बंगालमें १७९ अन्धे ऐसे हैं, जो बहरे और गूँगे भी हैं। यद्यपि इनकी शिक्षा विशेष कष्ट-साध्य और मँहगी है—क्योंकि इनमें से प्रत्येकको अलग-अलग और उसकी वैयक्तिक विकास तथा मानसिक स्थितिके अनुसार शिक्षा देनी होगी—फिर भी इस ओरसे आँखें नहीं मूँदी जा सकतीं। अमरीकाके अपने भ्रमणके दौरानमें मैंने हेलेन केलर और लौरा ब्राइडमैन तथा कुछ अन्य अन्ध-मूक-बधिर व्यक्तियोंसे मुलाक़ात की और उनके शिक्षणके तरीक़ोंका अध्ययन किया। दूसरी बार जब मैं अमरीका गया, तो एक दुभाषिएकी मार्फ़त मैंने इस सम्बन्धमें हेलेन केलरसे विशेष बातचीत की।

यूरोप और अमरीकामें इन लोगोंकी शिक्षाका आरम्भ १९वीं शताब्दीके मध्यमें हुआ। तबसे इस दिशामें वहाँ जैसी

उन्नति हुई है, उसपर सहज ही उन देशोंकी सरकार और निवासी गर्व कर सकते हैं। ब्रिटेन और अमरीकामें इन लोगोंकी शिक्षा, व्यापक ज्ञान-वर्द्धन और मनोरंजन आदिके लिए विशिष्ट पत्र-पत्रिकाएँ प्रकाशित की जाती हैं। अमरीकाके वैज्ञानिकों और शिक्षण-शास्त्रियोंके सहयोगसे इनके लिए ख़ास क़िस्मके रेडियोका भी आविष्कार हुआ है।

जहाँ विदेशोंमें अन्धोंकी शिक्षाके लिए इतना-कुछ हुआ है, वहाँ हमारा उस ओरसे उदासीन रहना लज्जाकी बात है। उतना न सही; पर अपनी शक्ति-भर थोड़ा-बहुत काम तो हम इस दिशामें कर ही सकते हैं। *इस कार्यमें मुझे एक अन्य साथीका भी पूर्ण सहयोग मिलेगा, और वह हैं मेरी सहधर्मिणी श्रीमती ईवलिन राय। उन्होंने मेरे साथ अमरीकामें अन्ध-मूक-बधिर लोगोंकी शिक्षाके तरीक़ोंका विशेष अध्ययन किया है।

प्रकाशन तथा अन्य सहायता-कार्य

केन्द्रका एक कार्य अन्धोंके सम्बन्धमें व्यापक रूपसे प्रकाशन-कार्य करना भी होगा। भारतीय जनता और सरकारकी इस सम्बन्धमें जो उदासीनता है, उसे दूर करने तथा सर्वसाधारणको अन्धोंके शिक्षणका महत्त्व समझनेके लिए यह नितान्त आवश्यक है। इस दिशामें यदि केन्द्र लोक-जाग्रति एवं लोक-सहानुभूति पैदा कर सके, तो भारतमें अन्ध-शिक्षाका कार्य बहुत-कुछ सुगम हो सकता है।

समय-समयपर विविध पत्रोंमें लेख और विज्ञप्तियाँ तथा विवरण-पुस्तिकाएँ छपवानेके अलावा मेरा विचार इस कार्यके लिए यथासम्भव शीघ्र ही एक मासिक अथवा द्वै-मासिक पत्र निकालनेका है। इसमें समय-समयपर अन्धोंके औद्योगिक एवं साहित्यिक कृतीत्वका वर्णन, उनकी शिक्षाके कमिक विकासका विवरण,

उनकी संख्या, चिकित्सा, ख़ाली कामों और काम चाहनेवालोंका परिचय-पता-ठिकाना, अन्धे होनेके कारणों तथा उपचार, उनकी दिक़्क़तोंको जनताके सामने लाना तथा उनका उन्हें दूर करनेके उपाय और आवश्यक क़ानूनों आदिकी चर्चा रहा करेगी। दूसरे शब्दोंमें यह पत्र लन्दनके राष्ट्रीय अन्ध-विद्यालय द्वारा प्रकाशित 'न्यूबीकन' और न्यूयार्कके अन्ध-विद्यालय द्वारा प्रकाशित 'आउटलुक फ़ार ब्लाइंड'के ही ढंगका होगा।

पर उपर्युक्त कार्योंसे ही हमारे कर्त्तव्य एवं कार्योंकी इति नहीं हो जाती। इनके बाद एक आवश्यक कार्य यह रह जाता है कि जो अन्धे शिक्षा समाप्त करें, उन्हें उनके कर सकने लायक़ काम दिलाना। यह हमारे सारे कार्योंका एक आवश्यक एवं अनिवार्य उपसंहार है। बिना इसकी सफलताके अन्धोंकी शिक्षा और उनके सम्बन्धमें प्रकाशन एवं प्रचार-कार्य करनेमें जनताका जो प्रचुर धन ख़र्च होगा, उसका लाभ या उपयोग ही क्या? सुशिक्षित करके भी अगर अन्धोंको सुखी, स्वतन्त्र एवं स्वावलम्बी नहीं बनाया गया, तो फिर शिक्षाका लाभ और अर्थ ही क्या? कोलम्बिया-विश्वविद्यालयके मनोविज्ञानके अध्यापक डा० चाइल्ड्सका कहना है कि समाजका सदस्य होनेपर भी जिस व्यक्तिकी उसके प्रति कोई ज़िम्मेदारी नहीं, वह एक तरहसे उससे निर्वासित ही समझा जाना चाहिए। इस तरहके निर्वासनका परिणाम उसके लिए घातक होता है!

अन्धों—शिक्षित या अशिक्षित—के भरण-पोषणका बोझ आख़िर पड़ता तो समाजपर ही है, फिर वह उनसे इसका कुछ प्रतिदान क्यों न ले? फिर कुछ कार्य तो हैं ही ऐसे, जिन्हें अन्धे शायद आँखवालोंकी अपेक्षा भी अधिक अच्छी तरह कर सकते हैं। पश्चिमवालोंने इस तथ्यको समझ लिया है; पर हमारे देशमें तो अभी अन्धोंके प्रति गहरी भ्रान्ति है। लोग

समझते हैं कि भीख माँगने या गाने-बजानेके अलावा वे कर ही क्या सकते हैं? ब्रिटेन, अमरीका और जापानमें अन्धे व्यक्ति सरकारी नौकरियाँ तक करते हैं। जर्मनीमें तो प्रत्येक दफ़्तर और कारख़ानेको एक निश्चित संख्यामें अंग-भंग हुए लोगोंको अपने यहाँ रखना पड़ता है। पर हमारे यहाँ ऐसा होनेके लिए अभी काफ़ी प्रकाशन, प्रचार और आन्दोलन करनेकी आवश्यकता है।

केन्द्रको इस कार्यके लिए ख़ास विभाग रखना होगा, जो सुशिक्षित अन्धोंको काम दिलानेका प्रयत्न करेगा। वह काम चाहनेवाले अन्धोंकी योग्यता आदि सहित एक सूची तैयार करेगा और क्या काम वे चाहते हैं अथवा कर सकते हैं, इसकी सूचना सम्भावित काम देनेवालों तक पहुँचायगा। इस सम्बन्धमें अन्य देशोंके-से क़ानून बनवाने आदिके लिए भी केन्द्र यत्न करेगा। वह सरकार और जनताको बतलायगा कि किस-किस कामके लिए वे अन्धोंको रख सकती हैं।

इन कामोंके अलावा केन्द्रको एक नगरमें कम-से-कम एक ऐसा क्लब या मनोरंजन-गृह अन्धोंके लिए अवश्य स्थापित करना होगा, जहाँ वे लोग एकत्र होकर परस्पर विचार-विनिमय, खेल-कूद और मन-बहलावके अन्यान्य साधनोंसे लाभ उठा सकें। इसीके द्वारा उनकी गोटों तथा यात्राओं आदिका भी प्रबन्ध किया जाना चाहिए। इस प्रकार अंन्धोंके जीवनको उनके और समाजके लिए बहुत-कुछ सुखद एवं उपयोगी बनाया जा सकता है।

HOW THE BLIND CAN HELP WAR-EFFORTS AND HOW WE CAN HELP THE WAR-BLINDED *

(Summary of a speech delivered at the Rotary Club, Calcutta, on the 24th November, 1942, under the Chairmanship of the President of the Club.)

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

It is indeed a great privilege for me to be able to address you for the third time. I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

It is a very common opinion among the seeing public that the blind are thoroughly incapable of rendering any sort of assistance in war-efforts and that they, on the contrary, cause special anxiety at the time of air-raids or any disorder resulting from the war.

Countless misconceptions and fairy tales have been circulated by the seeing people regarding their sightless fellow-beings, and this general opinion affirming the inability of the blind in aiding war-efforts, is undoubtedly one of those fairy tales. In the countries of Europe and in America, the blind are contributing a great deal towards strengthening their national war-efforts, and their help in this direction

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Portions of this speech were broadcast from the Calcutta Studio of the All-India Radio on the 22nd September, 1943, and a summary of the radio-talk was reproduced in the *Indian Listener*, New Delhi, 22nd October, 1943.

has always been encouraged and appreciated by the authorities concerned.

It may interest you to know a few of the ways in which the sightless individuals in those countries are aiding war-efforts. The instances of America and Great Britain will be cited here as typical representations

First, the blind in America are co-operating with the activities of the American Red Cross. Some of these activities consist of securing candidates for blood donations, volunteering as blood donors, answering telephone calls at Red Cross Headquarters, responding to enquiries, relaying messages, rolling bandages, sewing and knitting for troops, and so on. The blind are helping all these activities, both directly and indirectly. They are also working in close co-operation with the American Red Cross in raising funds to carry on its extensive work.

Secondly, they are helping the United States Treasury by buying defence bonds and stamps and by assisting in selling them.

Thirdly, they are trying to prevent waste and promote economical food habits in their families. They are also helping in conserving such vitally needed war materials as string, paper, rags, metals, etc.

Lastly, they are filling the vacancies in certain types of work, caused by the seeing people being drafted into the army. By doing so, they are not only setting the sighted workers free for war services, but also, through the efficient discharge of their duties, they are removing the common prejudice against blind labour. The value of sightless workers as sorters and packers has already been recognised.

They have proved the ability particularly in those types of work where sensitive touch may function as a fair substitute for vision. They have been able to release sighted workers from such duties as working at a telephone switch-board, stenography, typing, etc. There are over 2,000 blind workers engaged in 54 sheltered workshops for the blind in America. These workers are supplying Government orders essential to the security of the nation.

Similar duties are being performed by the blind in Great Britain. Some of them have been employed by the Government in positions of great confidence and responsibility. On the staff of the British Broadcasting Corporation, there are a few blind persons working side by side with their seeing compatriots. In "Outlines of a scheme for the resettlement of Disabled Persons," recently issued by the Ministry of Labour, the following important statement has been made:

"The winning of the war demands the full use of all available labour, and disabled men and women can make a valuable contribution to this and in some cases by entering the munition industries, and in other ways for work."

It may surprise you to hear that a few blind individuals have been engaged as Air-Raid Wardens in Great Britain. I repeat here the story of a British Blind Air-Raid Warden, as told by Dr. Earnest A. Whitfield, an Assistant in Educational Research at the New York Institute for the Education of the Blind:

"Although he was off duty one night during a raid in Liverpool, he and his wife went out to see

whether they could be of service. This was fortunate, for, while they were out, their house was struck by a bomb. They brought two old ladies to safety, helped wounded civilians to dressing stations and carried a baby, wrapped in a blanket, to a shelter."

Considering the recognition by the people of the contributions made by the blind towards war-efforts in Great Britain, Dr. Whitfield remarks:

"The demand of blind men and women to be looked on as ordinary members of society with the ordinary citizen's rights and duties and not as constituting a community apart has surely been vindicated."

In Germany and Italy, blind individuals have been trained and employed as detectors of planes. This has been made possible by training their power of hearing.

Sightless individuals should be able to aid in certain emergency services. While it is not possible that all blind people can successfully complete full first-aid courses, the capable ones among them are able to do bandaging. They can co-operate with the air-raid wardens regarding the special needs of blind persons.

The most important contribution that the blind can make towards war-efforts is by helping to maintain morale among the people. Having been successful in their lives through almost insurmountable difficulties with spirit unbroken, the blind can serve as inspiring examples of courage and patience to those who are on the point of yielding to fear, discouragement and misery.

It is quite possible that the sightless community in India can help their national war-efforts in many such ways. Blind persons should be told about these ways and the authorities should utilise their services. It is wrong to think that the blind do not want, or are unable, to co-operate with the seeing. It has rightly been observed by a blind physician:

"So long as the blind can still bring their stone, however small it may be, to the building of civilization or bring happiness to their kind, they feel that they live and, whatever be the wounds received, they are not out of the battle of life—the inequality of arms only increases their ardour."

Now, we come to the question of how we can help the war-blinded. It is in the fitness of things that society should do its utmost to bring light and happiness to those who lose the precious gift of sight in their attempts to defend our life and country. This social responsibility towards the war-blinded is too sacred to be left aside.

With the advent of the Second World War, the needs of war-blinded persons have captured the attention of the workers for the blind all over the world. Owing to the development of techniques in modern warfare, it is not only those fighting in the actual battlefield who are likely to lose their sight, but the civilian population also has the risk of such a grave possibility.

In order to solve the problems of the war-blinded in Great Britain, Sir Arthur Pearson founded St. Dunstan's Institution in London. In course of time, branches of this humanitarian institution were estab-

lished in some parts of the British Empire. India* is very much behind in this type of work and practically nothing has been done towards the welfare work for war-blinded Indian persons. Although these persons may be admitted to St. Dunstan's in London, and receive their training and education there, yet, as a rule, it is not obviously possible for them to do so. I had the opportunity of visiting St. Dunstan's in London and of meeting its Chairman, Sir Ian Fraser, who himself is blind. Sir Ian told me that there was no war-blinded Indian under training in that institution.

The realisation of the needs and sufferings of war-blinded persons in this country led the authorities of the All-India Lighthouse for the Blind to include this important phase of work in the aims and objects of this institution from the very outset. It is open to all persons—soldiers or civilians—blinded as a result of war, without restriction of sect, creed or colour. Since this institution is primarily intended for the blind adults in India, it can easily handle the problems of war-blinded soldiers, who constitute a section of the adult blind population.

I visited and studied the work for the war-blinded in various countries of Europe, in the United States, and Canada and saw the improved conditions in their lives as a result of collective human efforts.

* Since this speech was delivered, some work for the Indian war-blinded has been undertaken. In July, 1943, a branch of St. Dunstan's was opened in Dehra Dun under the guidance of Major Sir Clutha Mackenzie. A report of the activities of this institution, released recently, reveals excellent progress.

I invite the public in general and ex-servicemen in particular to co-operate with the All-India Lighthouse for the Blind in its work.

I request you to consider the problems of the blind not with pity and maudlin sentimentality but with practical sympathy and an objective outlook. Anything done for the blind should not be regarded as an outcome of charity and rare benevolence. The blind, as any other physically handicapped group, should be considered as an integral part of society, and it must be realised that the progress of society as a whole will be substantially hindered if the problems of the afflicted minorities are not solved from both humanitarian and economic standpoints.

This is exactly what was expressed at the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection when it was stated:

" If we want civilisation to march forward, it will march not only on the feet of healthy children, but beside them, shoulder to shoulder, must go those others—those children we have called the handicapped—the lame ones, the blind, the deaf, and those sick in body and mind. All these children are ready to be enlisted in this moving army, ready to make their contribution to human progress; to bring what they have of intelligence, of capacity, of spiritual beauty."







The Carpentry Class of the All-India Lighthouse of the Blind

VOCATIONS FOR THE BLIND *

What can blind persons do and reasonably expect at the end of their training and education? This is a most important question; and, unless this question can satisfactorily be answered, there is hardly a sense in undertaking any welfare work for the blind.

In India, the blind persons have, as a rule, no career except that of carrying on a miserable and humiliating existence until it is terminated by death.

The case is completely different with the majority of the blind in the European countries, America and Japan.

The careers in which the blind persons in these countries are usually engaged, may be divided into three groups: (*i*) Professions; (*ii*) Music; and (*iii*) Industrial, agricultural and other occupations.

(*i*) PROFESSIONS

These include the so-called intellectual occupations which a large number of blind persons are carrying on very successfully either independently or as hired jobs. It is needless to say that blindness in itself does not affect the actual or potential intelligence of an individual, and blind persons can, therefore, give very good accounts of themselves in those occupations in which intelligence, concentration, thinking, memory and other components of the mind play the most important part. Of course, some sighted

* Published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 10th January, 1943, and the *Hindu*, Madras, 24th January, 1943.

assistance may be needed here and there. But, then, it is not at all difficult for a blind person to appoint a suitable seeing assistant, if he himself is entrusted with some paying work.

In Europe, America and Japan, there are many successful blind Lawyers, Editors, Reporters, Professors, School-teachers, Administrators, Life Insurance Agents, Radio-Announcers, Doctors, Clergymen, and persons engaged in several other professions.

There is an American lady, Miss Smith, who is a blind reporter of the *Buffalo Express*—a very influential daily paper in the State of New York. She travels throughout the continent of America and Canada, guided by her Seeing Eye Dog, and, thus, collects news and views for her paper.

Mr. Walter R. McDonald, blind since the age of 13 owing to a gun-accident, is the Chairman of the Public Service Commission in Georgia, U. S. A. In addition to this position, he is the President of the South Eastern Association of Railroad and Utilities Commissioners, and the Executive Secretary and Director of Freight and Rate Adjustments for the Southern Governors' Conference.

Mr. William Taylor is a lawyer of great reputation in Pennsylvania, U. S. A. He is a solicitor for two Townships one School Board, one Building and Loan Association and one Chamber of Commerce. He is also a member of the Public Relations Committee of the Pennsylvania Bar Association, the Chairman of the Speakers' Bureau of the Junior Bar Conference of the American Bar Association and the Director on the Board of a local Children's Health Camp.

A very well-known blind professor who is in charge of the Department of History at Blue Mountain College, Blue Mountain, Mississippi, U. S. A., is Dr. David Guyton. He is also the President of a bank in that town, and is a correspondent for several newspapers.

It should be stated with particular emphasis that in most of the Western countries, there is no bar against blind persons being eligible for Government service. Many sightless persons are actually engaged in the Government Service in Great Britain and the United States. Notices are occasionally issued by the Federal Government of the United States, asking blind steno-typists to apply for Government appointments. Mr. Henry Fawcett, a blind Englishman, served as the Postmaster-General of Great Britain for several years, and, thus, held a post in the British Ministry. It is interesting to note that he was also a member of the British Parliament, and, owing to his great sympathy for India, he was nicknamed the "India Member." He initiated several laws and regulations providing facilities to the blind in postal matters.

In India, however, a blind person cannot be appointed to a Government job, not even to the lecturership in a Government college, on account of his blindness.

There are many active politicians and legislators among the blind persons in Europe and America. The blind members of the British Parliament and of the Congress of the United States have succeeded in passing several laws which have greatly ameliorated the lot of the blind in those countries.

So far as the work for the blind is concerned, it is recognised that capable blind persons are better suited to this work than the sighted. The reason is that the sightless persons know exactly where the shoe pinches. Besides, their example provides a strong inspiration to the blind under training and in general.

Dr. Carl Strehl, the famous Director of a blind institution in Germany, has rightly remarked:

" As a rule, the blind child will have more faith in a blind teacher; for in the blind teacher one has a reason to expect a deeper understanding of the psychological problems of the child. His example will usually help to overcome the inferiority complex that is so common with blind children."

The same view has been supported by Sir Ian Fraser, the Chairman of St. Dunstan's in London, in a statement:

" In every country every encouragement should be given to young blind people who have the gift of leadership, to come forward and help to guide blind community towards greater opportunities for material and spiritual well-being."

The heads of almost all the State Commissions for the blind in the United States are blind persons. Mr. Robert Irwin, the Executive Director of the American Foundation for the blind—the greatest national organisation for the blind in America, M. Paul Guinnot, the Secretary-General of the largest welfare centre for the blind in France, Sir Ian Fraser, the Chairman of St. Dunstan's in London, Herr Von Gerstoff, the Director of the National Institution for the Blind in Germany, Mr. Takeo Iwahashi, the Founder-Director of the " Lighthouse for the Blind "

in Osaka, Japan, and several other persons engaged in welfare work for the blind, are themselves without sight.

(ii) *Music*

The general belief that the blind individuals are born musicians, is absolutely false. It must, however, be conceded that the profession of music offers less handicap to a blind person than other occupations. There are many expert blind musicians and entertainers who are making handsome incomes through their talents.

(iii) *Industrial, Agricultural and other Occupations*

The majority of blind persons are engaged in these occupations. Many laws have been passed in the Western countries to protect the blind workers against seeing competitors. In Germany, a certain percentage from the physically handicapped persons must be employed in a large factory by virtue of a legislative enactment. The Randolph-Shephard Act and the Wagner-O'Day Act have given a good deal of protection and concession to the blind workers in America. According to the latter Act, the Federal and State Government offices are required to purchase the products manufactured by the blind. This law has, thus, given employment to thousands of the sightless individuals in the United States.

In Japan, the professions of massage and acupuncture have been more or less entirely restricted to persons without sight. As a consequence, there is

hardly any unemployment among the blind in that country.

Weaving, caning, telephone-operating, poultry-raising, shop-keeping, trading, and so on, are a few out of a host of industrial and agricultural pursuits in which millions of blind persons are gainfully employed.

The reasons of this wonderful achievement in the Western countries and Japan are mainly three:

First, there are elaborate arrangements for the education and training of blind persons, both children and adults.

In India, there was no provision for the education of the adult blind until very recently, and the provision for education of blind children is very limited.

It is imperatively necessary to extend facilities for the education of blind children. This can easily be done if the new educational philosophy and practice, current in different countries of Europe and in America since the beginning of the present century, are adopted. This consists of the introduction of the education of the blind in schools for the seeing. Most of the present educationists of the blind hold that it is better for sightless children to be educated with their seeing compatriots in ordinary schools than in special institutions where their association is confined only to those having the similar physical handicap. Since the execution of this idea in actual practice in 1900, this variety of co-education in America has become so popular to the parents and guardians of visually handicapped children and to the children themselves that, according to an educational survey

in 1936, there were more blind and partially-sighted boys and girls studying in ordinary schools than those enrolled at residential institutions for the blind, the recorded number being 7,251 in ordinary schools and 5,851 in special institutions.

Secondly, extensive investigations into the market conditions and into the types of work that blind persons can do very well, have been undertaken. Experiments in new industries and occupations have been made, with the result that the blind persons know in advance their chances of success in a particular pursuit.

Similar researches and investigations should be initiated in this country. Since the process of industrialisation has not gone far ahead in India, there is a greater scope for the blind here to earn their livelihood through cottage industries and agricultural pursuits than through the highly mechanised labour in the Western countries.

Lastly, great efforts have been made to change the unreasonable public attitude towards the blind and their abilities. It has been realised that there is hardly any sense in spending public money for the purpose of educating and training blind persons, and then refusing to provide them with suitable employment. It has further been realised that the blind employees take more care to do their part efficiently as they know that they always work against public prejudice and suspicion.

Miss Helen Keller, the renowned blind-deaf-mute scholar of America, has rightly pointed out that *the public must learn that the blind man is neither a genius nor a freak nor an idiot. He has a mind*

which can be educated, a hand which can be trained, ambitions which it is right for him to strike to realise, and it is the duty of the public to help him to make the best of himself, so that he can win light through work.

The question of vocations for the blind is indeed the most important problem which the workers for the blind cannot solve without the aid of the Government and the general public. This question should be approached not only from the humanitarian standpoint, but also from social and economic considerations. The following extracts from the report of the Whitehouse Conference on Child Health and Protection, relative to the point under discussion, are very instructive:

"If we want civilisation to march forward, it will march not only on the feet of healthy children, but beside them, shoulder to shoulder, must go those others—those children we have called the handicapped—the lame ones, the blind, the deaf, and those sick in body and mind. All these children are ready to be enlisted in this moving army, ready to make their contribution to human progress; to bring what they have of intelligence, of capacity, of spiritual beauty. *American civilisation cannot ignore them.*"

Can the civilisation of India do so?

DONATION OF BLOOD BY THE BLIND *

(A LETTER)

I understand that there is a desperate need for blood donations in view of the present emergency in our country. I take this occasion to appeal to all the blind men and women in India to aid war efforts by donating their blood immediately. It is not unlikely that, among the persons saved through these blood donations, there may be some friends and relatives of the donors.

I had previous occasions to refer to the ways in which the sightless individuals in Great Britain and in America are contributing towards their national war efforts. Donating blood is one of the most useful contributions which the blind can make and have been making in the Western countries; and in this, blindness does not appear as a handicap at all. There is no reason why 600,000 blind persons in India should lag behind their compatriots in other lands in the matter of strengthening the defences and war efforts of their own country.

I may state from my personal experience that there is no baneful effect on the body as a result of donating blood. No one should worry or be panicky on this account.

Those blind persons in Calcutta, who would like to donate blood, should write to me so that they may be informed about arrangements regarding the date and place for such donations.

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* Published in the *Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta, 12th January, 1943; *Statesman*, Calcuttta, 13th January, 1943; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 14th January, 1943.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE CONFERENCE

(Summary of a speech delivered at the Government House, Calcutta, on the 28th January, 1943, under the Chairmanship of Major Sir Clutha Mackenzie.)

I am indeed very glad that Sir Clutha has been able to call this conference in order to discuss the problems of the civilian blind in India in general and in Bengal in particular. I have always felt a great need of a general discussion like the present one.

If I were to mention all the points I wish to, I shall be taking a lot of time of this conference. I shall, therefore, state here only a few salient points:

1. Every blind institution in India should be compelled to employ more blind persons on its staff. It is very regrettable that the majority of these institutions do not give any opportunity to qualified sightless individuals, including their ex-students. How can the authorities of these institutions reasonably expect that their ex-students will be employed by others when they themselves refuse to utilise their services? I visited a large institution for the blind in America where, out of 33 members of the staff, 18 were sightless. Unless the employment of the blind in blind institutions is encouraged, the lot of the trained blind persons will continue to be miserable, particularly in India, where the seeing people are still very suspicious about the abilities of sightless individuals and are reluctant to employ them. The blind institutions in this country cannot plead the lack of qualified blind persons, as that will be an indictment against the institutions themselves inasmuch as it will prove conclusively that these institutions could

not turn out a good number of trained students during the period of about 60 years' blind work in India.

2. More institutions for the adult blind should be founded in this country, as about 90% of the total blind population in every province are adults. The All-India Lighthouse for the Blind is, so far, the only institution * in India, which was founded expressly to train the adult blind.

3. There should be a Government Department for the blind in every province on the model of the departments of the County Councils in Great Britain and the State Commissions for the Blind in America. Some of the duties of these provincial departments will be: To keep accurate statistics of the blind in their territorial areas, to register the number of employable blind and to find work for them, to record the number of unemployable blind and to provide financial relief to them, to supervise and to control the education of the blind in the province, and so on.

4. Some laws should be enacted by the Central and Provincial legislatures without any further delay, providing employment and certain other facilities to the blind. Unfortunately, not a single law has been passed in India aiming at the amelioration of the lot of the blind, although there are so many of such laws enacted by the British Parliament and the American Congress.

5. A Braille printing-plant should be installed immediately, from where books and journals will be

* About six months after this conference, another institution for the adult blind, *viz.*, St. Dunstan's, was established at Dehra Dun. However, St. Dunstan's is intended exclusively for the war-blinded servicemen.

printed and supplied to the blind all over India. It is a great pity that the blind students in schools and colleges have to transcribe their text-books with their own hands and many forget Braille for the want of reading matter.

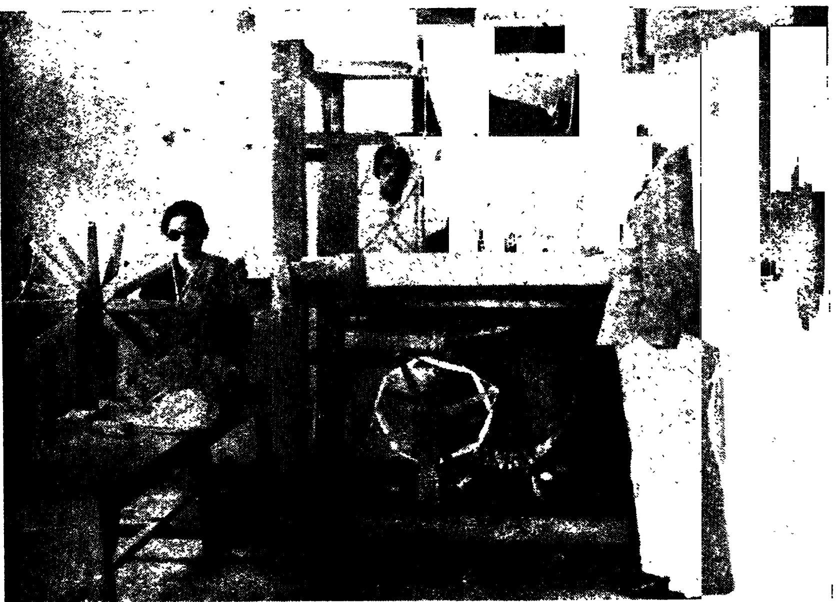
6. Lastly, there should be a journal for the teachers and workers for the blind. Without it, we are unable to ascertain what the other institutions and individuals are doing. This has created such an extreme isolationism among the workers for the blind in India that nobody is aware of the exact number of blind institutions in the country or is interested in what they are doing This lack of co-operation and co-ordination is very detrimental to the progress of blind work.

There are many other points which could be mentioned here. But the above-stated points are very important and should be given effect to as soon as possible. I have been writing and speaking for the adoption of these and several other points for the last six or seven years; but the appeals and arguments of a blind man seem to have fallen on deaf ears.

EXTRACTS FROM THE FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ALL-INDIA LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND

(Written for the first Annual General Meeting of this institution held at the Asutosh College, Calcutta, on the 30th May, 1943, under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. P. Mookerjee.)

In presenting the first Annual Report of this institution, we confess that we have not been able to



The Weaving Class of the All-India Lighthouse for the Blind

accomplish even a good fraction of what we had in view at the time when this welfare centre for the blind was established about two years ago. This shortcoming is due to war conditions and to the lack of wide public sympathy towards the cause of the blind. We regret that neither the Government of Bengal * nor the Corporation of Calcutta has yet found its way to help this institution with a capital or a recurring grant. We take this opportunity to appeal to them to stretch forward their kind and helping hand so that this noble institution for the blind may not have to be closed down for want of funds.

In spite of all these difficulties, we feel proud that we have been able to carry on our work for the last two years. This has been possible due to the financial assistance which we have received from time to time from the charitably-inclined members of the public, particularly the mercantile communities in Calcutta. We extend our thankful appreciation to them for their ready response to our appeal.

* * *

The following are the main aims and objects of this institution:

(*a*) To impart training and education mainly to the adult blind of both sexes belonging to every community and coming from all parts of India, and to make them, as far as practicable, contributing members of society;

* Since this Report was submitted, the Government of Bengal has sanctioned a recurring grant of Rs. 1,200 per annum towards the maintenance of this institution.

(*b*) To provide instruction to those children and adults of both sexes who are suffering from the combination of blindness, deafness and muteness.

(*c*) To print books and journals in Braille in Indian languages and in English for the use of visually handicapped persons;

(*d*) To carry on publicity, placement and other general welfare work for the visually handicapped; and,

(*e*) To conduct any other activity as may be decided upon by the Executive of the institution for the amelioration of the conditions of the visually handicapped in this country.

As stated before, we have not been able to undertake the project in full owing to the lack of financial resources.

* * *

Many individuals and organisations have written to us commending the work which is being carried on in this institution. We thank all of them for their appreciative understanding of our humble efforts to be of some service to the less fortunate members of our society. Their appreciations served as a great source of our inspiration and encouragement.

We would like to record here two notable appreciations. Her Excellency the Marchioness of Linlithgow (the Vicereine of India),* in a letter to the President of the institution, Rt. Hon'ble Lord Sinha, said:

" I am most interested to hear of your project for the new institution called ' Lighthouse for the Blind.'

* She left India in 1943 on the conclusion of the term of office of His Excellency Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy and Governor-General of India.

I think it is a most necessary step as it includes the education of the adult blind and also is to serve the whole of India "

Her Excellency also granted an interview to the writer and his wife, Mrs. Evelyn Roy, at the Viceregal Lodge in New Delhi on the 17th November, 1941 and enquired of them about the progress of this institution.

Mahatma Gandhi wrote the following line to the writer:

"I wish you every success in your efforts to serve the blind of India."

* * *

The institution is still in its infancy. But we feel sure that it will grow very rapidly if the Government and the public lend their generous aid to it. We believe that, the institution has already found for itself an important place in the field of social service in this country, and its importance and usefulness will be increased a thousandfold if the public take up the cause with greater sympathy and earnestness.

* * *

Looking beyond the precincts of the institution, we may add a few words about the important activities for the blind in India:

(*i*) Major Sir Clutha Mackenzie, himself blind, has been appointed by the Government of India to draw up a comprehensive plan for the civilian blind, which will take effect as soon as possible after the war. We offer our congratulations to the Government of India for having taken this step and also for having appointed a well-qualified person for this great work.

We had the great honour and pleasure of welcoming Sir Clutha to our institution. He was glad

to see the work of our school and was pleased to enter the following remark in our Visitors' Book:

"It has given me great pleasure to see the excellent work and progress. I wish the Lighthouse the best of luck in the further development of its work and trust it will have the opportunity to fulfil its best ambitions. It is doing a most useful pioneer work."

We wish Sir Clutha all success in his task.

(*ii*) We congratulate the Government of India on their taking another progressive step in the education of the blind in India. In 1941, they set up a Committee for the purpose of devising a uniform Braille Code applicable to the whole of India. The Committee met on the 17th and the 18th November, 1941, in New Delhi, and Mrs. Roy and the writer attended it on behalf of this institution. A Select Committee is now engaged in drafting a Code * on the principles laid down by the Braille Code Committee in 1941. We hope that the Select Committee will be able to find a formula to the satisfaction of all concerned.

(*iii*) The teaching programme which was introduced at the Teachers' Training Department of the Calcutta University, in 1940, for the purpose of training intending teachers and workers for the blind, is maintaining a good progress. During the period under review, 55 students—30 men and 25 women—took this course.

The subject is divided into three parts, *viz.*, History of the Education of the Blind, Special Psycholo-

* The draft Code was submitted by the Select Committee towards the end of 1943.



The Book-binding Class of the All-India Lighthouse for the Blind

gical Problems of Blindness, and Practical Aspects in the Education of the Blind.

At present, the course is open only to University graduates, and is for the duration of one year.

This is the first time in the educational history of India that a course of this type has been included in the list of prescribed subjects taught by a University. We record our congratulations to Dr. S. P. Mookerjee for helping in the introduction of this course.

AT THE FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ALL-INDIA LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND *

(Summary of a speech delivered at the Asutosh College, Calcutta, on the 30th May, 1943, under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. P. Mookerjee.)

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

From the portions of the Annual Report, which have just been read out to you, you will observe that the progress of our institution has not measured up to our ideal which we had before us when we commenced our work about two years ago. This is entirely due to the deplorable financial condition through which we have been passing all the while

* Published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, and *Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta (all on the 31st May, 1943).

since the establishment of our institution. However, the money which we have received has been put to its best and most economic use, and we very confidently hope that our institution will see its better days in the near future through wider public support and sympathy.

Our work was officially inaugurated under a Committee formed at a meeting held at the Calcutta University on the 3rd April, 1941 under the presidency of Dr. S. P. Mookerjee. The Committee was busy for about three months in collecting funds and educating public opinion, and our institution was opened on the 1st August, 1941. The work of the school commenced with five pupils—four men and one woman, and since then we have been marching towards our goal with rather painfully slow steps owing to financial difficulties, but with a sure conviction of our ultimate success.

The welfare work for the blind may broadly be considered under three heads:

1. The education and training of pre-school children.

Many centres, known as "The Sunshine Homes for Blind Babies," have been established in Europe and America, in order to train blind children, ranging up to 5 or 6 years of age. These children need special guidance as they cannot learn through visual limitation as the seeing children do. For this very reason, the objective stimuli in their education have to be different.

In India, there is no organisation for these children, although their number is about 15,000.

2. Education of boys and girls of school-going age.

We have some arrangements for these boys and girls almost in every province. But the number of schools is too inadequate for about 50,000 blind boys and girls in this country. Besides, most of these schools are very ill-equipped and are run on lines not in conformity with the theories and principles of modern educational psychology.

3. The training of adults.

Our institution is primarily intended for these persons. Although they constitute about 90% of the total blind population in India, practically nothing was done for them.

Broadly speaking, two problems have to be tackled in connection with the happiness and rehabilitation of the adult blind. These are (1) their economic independence and (2) a change of the present deplorable public attitude towards them.

The purpose of a blind institution obviously fails if blind persons cannot be provided with suitable employments at the end of their training and education. Although in the Western countries, the persons without sight have been occupying several positions of great responsibility, yet the blind in India find it very hard to be self-supporting in spite of their having received proper education and training. A few instances of successful blind persons in America and England may be cited here:

(*a*) Miss Smith, a blind woman, has been a successful reporter for the *Buffalo Express* in the State of New York. This paper is very well-known in America, and Miss Smith collects news and views for it. With the help of her dog, Seeing Eye, she tours all over America and Canada, and gathers materials for her paper.

(*b*) Mr. Walter R. McDonald, blind from his 13th year, is the Chairman of the Public Service Commission in Georgia, U. S. A., President of the South-Eastern Association of Railroad and Utilities Commissioners, and Director of Freight and Rate Adjustments for the Southern Governors' Conference.

(*c*) Mr. William Taylor is a distinguished lawyer in Pennsylvania, and solicitor for two Townships, one School Board, one Building and Loan Association, and one Chamber of Commerce. He is also a member of the Public Relations Committee of the Pennsylvania Bar Association, Chairman of the Speakers Bureau of the Junior Bar Conference of the American Bar Association, and the Director of the Board of the local Children's Health Camp.

(*d*) The Head of the Department of History at Blue Mountain College in Mississippi, is Mr. David Guyton. He is also the President of a bank and correspondent of several newspapers.

(*c*) Mr. Henry Fawcett, blind from his 23rd year, served as the Postmaster-General of Great Britain for several years. He introduced many postal reforms. He was also in great sympathy with the political aspirations of the Indian people and this earned him the nick-name of " India Member " in the British Parliament.

It may be noted here that blind persons are not eligible for Government service in India, although the blind in the Western countries are not barred from entering into Government service.

In order to help towards the economic independence of the blind, some laws should be passed providing special facilities to the blind and protecting them from the sighted competition. Instances of

such laws in America are the Randolph-Sheppard Act, the O'Day Act, and several others, and in Great Britain, the Blind Persons Act, Special Pension Act, etc. These special legislations have been possible for the initiative taken by blind members of the American Congress and of the British Parliament. A few capable blind persons should be sent to the Indian legislatures for the purpose of enacting this type of legislation.

Coming to the question of public attitude towards the blind, it may be mentioned that the people in India have very queer notions about their sightless brothers and sisters. This is a great source of unhappiness to the blind. It is very often forgotten that blindness by itself does not affect the personality of a man or a woman. It should be remembered that the blind are just normal people in the dark.

In conclusion it is hoped that the public in general will kindly co-operate in the attempts of this institution at removing the miseries of blindness and making blind persons self-respecting and contributing members of society. This is indeed a huge task, as one-sixth of the total blind population in the world is in India. But we are confident that we shall succeed in our endeavours if we get the moral and material support from the Government and the public.

MR. RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE'S CONTRIBUTION TO BLIND EDUCATION IN INDIA *

Mr. Ramananda Chatterjee is already well-known to the Indian public as a gifted journalist, a deep political thinker and a staunch patriot. His three famous journals—*Modern Review*, *Prabasi* and *Vishal Bharat* —have been imparting knowledge, inspiration and entertainment to countless men and women in this country. The fame of *Modern Review* has even transcended the boundaries of India and, before the outbreak of the present war, this journal had a fairly good circulation abroad. While in New York, the writer had an opportunity to meet the world-renowned scholar and writer, Mr. Will Durant, and his wife, and both Mr. and Mrs. Durant paid a high tribute to the informative and thought-provoking notes which Mr. Chatterjee used to write for this journal.

But, until very recently, the number of those who knew about Mr. Chatterjee's contribution to blind education in India, was indeed insignificant. This deporable ignorance is a clear indication of the lack of public interest in the education of the blind in this country. Mr. Chatterjee's contribution to this cause is, however, of supreme importance for what it was as well as for what it did.

The credit of devising Bengali Braille is Mr. Chatterjee's. It is quite remarkable that Mr. Chatterjee who apparently did not have any special knowledge or training in blind work, could devise a

* Published in the *Modern Review*, Calcutta, November. 1943.

system for the blind 51 years ago, which is still in use in a slightly modified form. This simply speaks for the versatile genius of Mr. Chatterjee, and his contribuiton should receive a grateful acknowledgement from all workers for the blind in India, although, professionally speaking, he was not one of them. Strangely enough, so far as the writer is aware, no one made a reference in writing to this work of Mr. Chatterjee before 1940. How could this great contribution be shielded from public knowledge for about half a century?

In order to appraise properly what Mr. Chatterjee has done for the blind of this country, it is necessary to know something about the Braille system and about the state of blind education in India at the time when he made his contribution. The present article is not intended to be either technical or exhaustive. Consequently, only a very brief survery of the points referred to above is undertaken in the following paragraphs.

Braille is a system of reading and writing employed by the blind and it is made out of six embossed points (⠿) arranged in various positions and combinations.

Before the introduction of Braille, several systems of reading and writing for the blind were devised and experimented in Europe and America, but none was found to be quite satisfactory. In 1829, Louis Braille, himself blind, invented this system, which is known after his name and which is at present the only point system used by the blind in every country. But Braille had to wage a long and continuous war against its rival systems for recognition. Even in the French School where Louis

Braille was a teacher, this system was not accepted until 1854, *i.e.*, a quarter of a century after its invention. In America, this rivalry, known as the "Battle of the Types," was the severest.

However, the intrinsic merits of the Braille System were gradually recognised and all the competing systems were abandoned in its favour. Of course, adaptations and modifications had to be made by different nations according to their alphabetic and linguistic needs; but the basic six dots, formulated by Louis Braille, have been universally accepted.

Blind education in accordance with the Braille System, was introduced in India towards the close of the last century. In 1892, when Mr. Chatterjee devised his system, there were only two institutions for the blind in India—one at Amritsar,* Punjab, and the other at Palamcottah, Madras. Both these schools were started by the British missionaries and they soon adapted the English Braille to the languages prevalent in those provinces.

If Mr. Chatterjee wished to establish a blind school in Bengal, he could have easily done so. But it seems that he was more interested in the afflicted humanity in general than in any one particular section of it. *Dasashram* which was founded in Calcutta in order to shelter and protect all types of needy and handicapped persons, had a monthly journal of its own, namely, *Dasi*, of which Mr. Chatterjee was the editor. This journal was started in 1299 B.S., *i.e.*, in 1892, and Mr. Chatterjee used to write about

* The school at Amritsar was removed to Rajpur near Dehra Dun in 1903. *Vide* Dr. R. M. Halder's *The Visually Handicapped in India*, Page 254.

topics touching different social service fields. In the second issue of this journal, he contributed an article stressing the need of imparting suitable education to the blind. To this article he appended a complete plan showing how the English Braille could be adapted to Bengali. At this time, there was no school for the blind in Bengal and, so far as is known, there was no one who took any active step to start one. Mr. Chatterjee's adaptation of Bengali Braille did not, therefore, produce any tangible effect just then. Besides, with the extinction of *Dasi* in 1895 and Mr. Chatterjee's departure from Calcutta about that time, the whole idea of blind education in Bengal seems to have been shifted to the background.

The next adaptation of Bengali Braille, which is in use at present, is said to have been made by Mr. L. B. Shah some time after 1894. The writer's only source for this information is the report of the Calcutta Blind School for 1939, page 4. Thus, from the point of view of time, Mr. Chatterjee devised his system at least two or three years before the one evolved by Mr Shah, and since Mr. Shah's system differs very slightly from that of Mr. Chatterjee, it can be definitely established that Mr. Chatterjee is the originator of Bengali Braille.

The reasons as to why Mr. Chatterjee's original device was not put into actual use, are quite understandable. But it is indeed very difficult to explain how Mr. Chatterjee's great achievement was altogether ignored and forgotten by the public in general and by the workers for the blind in particular. As stated before, no one made any public reference to this work of Mr. Chatterjee before 1940.

In 1938, while engaged in the collection of data for his doctoral thesis, the writer quite accidentally came across the copy of *Dasi* in which Mr. Chatterjee's article on Blind Education appeared. The result of the writer's findings was passed on to other workers for the blind, and, at present, Mr. Chatterjee's contribution to blind education in India has been fully acknowledged.

It is indeed very gratifying to note that the authorities, staff and students of the "All-India Lighthouse For the Blind" got an opportunity during Mr. Chatterjee's lifetime to express publicly their sense of deep appreciation for his long-neglected work for the blind. This was done by presenting an address to him at his sick-bed on the 5th September, 1943.

26TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

(Summary of a speech delivered at the 26th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution, held at the Indian Association Hall, Calcutta, on the 7th November, 1943, under the Chairmanship of comrade M. N. Roy.)

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I feel extremely hesitant to address the present audience as, in the first place, I came just to listen to the speech of Mr. M. N. Roy, about whom I had

heard so much, and I did not come prepared to make a speech; and, in the second place, I am not fully conversant with the programme of the Radical Democratic Party, under whose auspices the present meeting has been convened. In any case, since I could not persuade the organisers of this meeting to leave me out of the list of today's speakers, I shall just say a few words.

It is certainly very heartening that the Red Army which was passing through great military reverses about this time last year, has achieved a brilliant success during the last few months. This is a good news not only for the European and American countries, but also for India. I am not an authority on military affairs and I do not presume to be able to elaborate much on this aspect of the topic. Mr. M. N. Roy will certainly develop this point for us at length when he will address the gathering.

I am an humble worker for the blind in India and I would like to take this opportunity to say a few words about blind work in Russia, resulting from an adherence to the principles of communism. I shall point out here that I do not claim to have full knowledge of communism either; but what I know about it leads me to conclude that the principle of equality as envisaged in the doctrine of communism, holds out a great hope for the blind. As you know, the sightless individuals in every country are looked upon as inferior to the seeing as the former are unable to participate in all types of activity on account of their physical handicap. But when communism declares the equality of rights and privileges for all persons irrespective of their social status and certain inherent advantages, the blind can

reasonably look forward to a better treatment than what has been meted out to them heretofore.

As a matter of fact, this is what is supposed to have taken place in Russia. From a few articles which I have read about the work for the blind in that country, it appears to me that the blind there have better opportunities for education and livelihood than in many countries. Unfortunately I could not carry out my plan of visiting Russia and see for myself the conditions of the blind there. However, if communism is true to its professed ideals, there is no reason to doubt the improved status of the blind in Russia.

I hope that the Radical Democratic Party which is striving to introduce the fundamentals of communism in India, will not forget the miserable conditions of about two million blind persons in this country. The blind in India will undoubtedly bless any movement or any Government which will help them to rise out of the present deplorable state of affairs and become normal human beings.

I, further, hope that my talk about the blind has not sounded very irrelevant to you as you have assembled to-day to celebrate the 26th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

ভারতের অন্ধ-শিক্ষায় রামানন্দ চট্টোপাধ্যায়ের দান*

রামানন্দ চট্টোপাধ্যায় আজ সমগ্র ভারতবর্ষে একজন খ্যাতনামা সাংবাদিক, বিচক্ষণ রাজনীতিজ্ঞ এবং অকপট স্বদেশহিতৈষী ব'লে পরিচিত। তাঁর প্রতিষ্ঠিত "প্রবাসী," "মডার্ণ রিভিউ" ও "বিশাল ভারত"—এই তিনখানি বিখ্যাত মাসিক পত্রিকা বহু বৎসর ধ'রে ভারতের অগণিত নরনারীদের জ্ঞান, শিক্ষা এবং আনন্দ বিতরণ ক'রে আসছে। "মডার্ণ রিভিউ"এর খ্যাতি কেবল ভারতবর্ষেই সীমাবদ্ধ নয়। বর্ত্তমান যুদ্ধের পূর্ব্বে বিদেশেও এই পত্রিকার বহুল প্রচার ছিল। এই প্রবন্ধ-লেখকের নিউ ইয়র্কে অবস্থানকালে জগদ্বিখ্যাত পণ্ডিত ও লেখক উইল ডুরান্ট ও তাঁর পত্নীর সঙ্গে সাক্ষাতের সুযোগ হ'য়েছিল। মিঃ ও মিসেস ডুরান্ট উভয়েই রামানন্দবাবুর সুচিন্তিত সম্পাদকীয় মন্তব্যগুলির বিশেষ প্রশংসা করেন।

কিন্তু ভারতের অন্ধ-শিক্ষায় রামানন্দবাবুর দানের কথা অল্পদিন পূর্ব্বেও প্রায় সকলেরই অজ্ঞাত ছিল। এদেশের জনসাধারণের অন্ধ-শিক্ষা সম্বন্ধে একান্ত ঔদাসীন্যই এই শোচনীয় অজ্ঞতার একমাত্র কারণ। যা হোক, রামানন্দবাবুর এই দানের ফলে এদেশের দৃষ্টিহীনদের যে অশেষ কল্যাণ সাধিত হ'য়েছে সে বিষয়ে কোনই সন্দেহ নেই।

রামানন্দবাবু বাংলা ব্রেইল বর্ণমালার উদ্ভাবক; এবং এই ব্রেইল লিপি তাঁর পক্ষে অত্যন্ত কৃতিত্বের বিষয়। তাঁর এই বাংলা অন্ধ-লিপি সামান্য পরিবর্তিত অবস্থায় বর্ত্তমানে প্রচলিত। রামানন্দবাবু নিজে অন্ধ-শিক্ষা সম্বন্ধে বিশেষ কিছু না জানা সত্ত্বেও যে প্রায় ৫১ বৎসর পূর্ব্বে এটা উদ্ভাবন ক'রতে পেরেছিলেন, এ অতি আশ্চর্য্যের বিষয়। এতেই রামানন্দবাবুর বহুমুখী প্রতিভার সম্যক পরিচয় পাওয়া যায়। রামানন্দবাবু নিজে অন্ধ-শিক্ষাব্রতী না হ'লেও, ভারতের সমস্ত অন্ধ-শিক্ষাব্রতী এবং দৃষ্টিহীন নরনারীগণ তাঁর এই উদ্ভাবনের কথা কৃতজ্ঞ-চিত্তে স্মরণ ক'রবে। লেখকের যতদূর জানা আছে, ১৯৪০ সালের পূর্ব্ব পর্য্যন্ত রামানন্দবাবুর এই উদ্ভাবন সম্বন্ধে কিছুই লিখিতভাবে প্রকাশিত হয় নি। এই মহান উদ্ভাবনের কথা কেমন ক'রে যে প্রায় অর্দ্ধ শতাব্দী পর্য্যন্ত জনসাধারণের অজ্ঞাত ছিল, সেটা অত্যন্ত বিস্ময়কর।

* ১৩৫০ সালের অগ্রহায়ণ মাসের "প্রবাসী" পত্রিকায় প্রকাশিত।

রামানন্দবাবু এদেশের দৃষ্টিহীনদের জন্য যা ক'রেছেন তা সম্যক উপলব্ধি ক'রতে হ'লে ব্রেইল প্রণালী সম্বন্ধে কিছু জানা, এবং রামানন্দবাবু যে সময়ে বাংলা ব্রেইল উদ্ভাবন ক'রেছিলেন, এ দেশের তৎকালীন অন্ধ-শিক্ষা সম্বন্ধে কিছু জানা প্রয়োজন। স্থানাভাব বশতঃ এখানে এ সম্বন্ধে বিস্তারিত লেখা সম্ভবপর নয়; অতি সংক্ষেপে এ বিষয়ে কিছু আলোচনা করা হবে।

ব্রেইল প্রণালী অন্ধদের লিখন ও পঠনের জন্য ছয়টি উচচ বিন্দুর (⠿) সাহায্যে গঠিত একপ্রকার লিপি। এর একটি হ'তে ছটি পর্য্যন্ত বিন্দু ভিন্ন ভিন্ন অবস্থান অনুসারে সাজিয়ে এই বর্ণমালার সৃষ্টি হ'য়েছে। অন্ধেরা আঙুল দিয়ে অনুভব ক'রে এগুলো প'ড়ে থাকে।

ব্রেইল প্রণালী আবিষ্কৃত হওয়ার পূর্ব্বে ইউরোপ ও আমেরিকায় অন্ধদের জন্য লেখাপড়ার আরও অনেক প্রকার পদ্ধতি উদ্ভাবিত ও পরীক্ষিত হ'য়েছিল; কিন্তু তার কোনটিই সম্পূর্ণ সন্তোষজনক হয় নি। লুই ব্রেইল নামে একজন অন্ধ ব্যক্তি ১৮২৯ খ্রীষ্টাব্দে এই প্রণালী আবিষ্কার করেন এবং তার নামানুসারে এই লিপির নাম হয় ব্রেইল। বর্ত্তমানে অন্ধদের জন্য জগতের সর্ব্বত্রই এই পদ্ধতি প্রচলিত। কিন্তু পূর্ব্বে আরও অনেকগুলো প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী পদ্ধতি বিদ্যমান থাকায় ব্রেইল প্রণালীর প্রতিষ্ঠালাভ ক'রতে অনেক বিলম্ব হ'য়েছিল। এমন কি, যে বিদ্যালয়ে লুই ব্রেইল নিজে অধ্যাপনা ক'রতেন সেখানেও ১৮৫৪ খ্রীষ্টাব্দে অর্থাৎ আবিষ্কারের প্রায় ২৫ বৎসর পর এটা গৃহীত হয়। এই প্রতিযোগিতা সবচেয়ে তীব্র হ'য়েছিল আমেরিকায়। সেখানে এটা "ব্যাটল অব দি টাইপ্‌স্" অর্থাৎ লিপিমালার যুদ্ধ নামে প্রসিদ্ধ।

অবশেষে ব্রেইল প্রণালীই সবচেয়ে উৎকৃষ্ট এবং সুবিধাজনক ব'লে বিবেচিত হওয়ায় সকল দেশেই এটা প্রচলিত হয়, এবং অন্যান্য পদ্ধতিগুলি একে একে পরিত্যক্ত হয়। অবশ্য বিভিন্ন দেশের ভাষা ও বর্ণমালার পার্থক্য ও প্রয়োজনানুসারে এই অক্ষরগুলো অদলবদল ক'রে নেওয়া হ'য়েছে। কিন্তু সব দেশের ব্রেইল বর্ণমালাই লুই ব্রেইল আবিষ্কৃত ছয়টি বিন্দুর উপর ভিত্তি ক'রে গঠিত।

ভারতে ব্রেইল-পদ্ধতিতে অন্ধ-শিক্ষার সর্ব্বপ্রথম প্রচলন হয় বিগত শতাব্দীর শেষভাগে। ১৮৯২ খ্রীষ্টাব্দে যখন রামানন্দবাবু বাংলা ব্রেইল উদ্ভাবন করেন, তখন এদেশে দুটি মাত্র অন্ধ-বিদ্যালয় ছিল—একটি অমৃতসরে* এবং

* অমৃতসরের এই বিদ্যালয়টি ১৯০৩ খৃষ্টাব্দে দেরাদুনের নিকটবর্ত্তী রাজপুরে উঠে এসেছে।

অপরটি মাদ্রাজ প্রদেশের অন্তর্গত পালামকোট্টায়। এই দুটি বিদ্যালয়ই ব্রিটিশ মিশনারীদের দ্বারা প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়; এবং তাঁরা ঐ সব অঞ্চলের ভাষার উপযোগী ক'রে ইংরেজী ব্রেইল পরিবর্তিত করেন।

রামানন্দবাবু বাংলা দেশে একটি অন্ধ-বিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠা করবার ইচ্ছা ক'রলে অনায়াসেই ক'রতে পারতেন। কিন্তু তা যে করেন নি তার কারণ বোধ হয় তিনি কেবল একপ্রকার নয়—সর্ব্বপ্রকার দুর্দ্দশাগ্রস্ত জনসাধারণেরই কল্যাণ-কামী ছিলেন। সর্ব্বপ্রকার অভাব ও দুর্দ্দশাগ্রস্ত জনসাধারণের আশ্রয় ও ভরণ-পোষণের জন্য কলিকাতায় "দাসাশ্রম" নামে একটি জনহিতকর প্রতিষ্ঠান স্থাপিত হ'য়েছিল। এই আশ্রমের "দাসী" নামে একটি নিজস্ব মাসিক পত্রিকা ছিল; এবং রামানন্দবাবু ছিলেন তার সম্পাদক। বাংলা ১২৯৯ সালে অর্থাৎ ১৮৯২ খ্রীষ্টাব্দে এই পত্রিকা প্রথম প্রকাশিত হয়। রামানন্দবাবু দেশ ও সমাজের মঙ্গলকর অনেক বিষয়ে এতে লিখতেন। এই পত্রিকার দ্বিতীয় সংখ্যায় তিনি এদেশে অন্ধদের উপযুক্ত শিক্ষাদান বিষয়ে একটি প্রবন্ধ লেখেন, এবং ইংরেজী ব্রেইল কেমন ক'রে বাংলায় পরিবর্তন করা যেতে পারে, তার একটি সম্পূর্ণ বিবরণ প্রকাশ করেন। সে সময়ে বাংলা দেশে কোনই অন্ধ-বিদ্যালয় ছিল না; এবং এরূপ একটি বিদ্যালয় স্থাপনের চেষ্টাও খুব সম্ভব কেউ করেন নি। সুতরাং রামানন্দবাবু বাংলা ব্রেইল উদ্ভাবন করা সত্ত্বেও সে সময়ে এটা কার্য্যকরভাবে ব্যবহৃত হয় নি। তা ছাড়া ১৮৯৭ খ্রীষ্টাব্দে "দাসী" পত্রিকার প্রকাশ বন্ধ হ'য়ে যাওয়ায় এবং প্রায় তৎপূর্ব্বেই রামানন্দবাবু কলিকাতা থেকে অন্যত্র চ'লে যাওয়ায়, বাংলা দেশে অন্ধ-শিক্ষার পরিকল্পনা সাফল্যমণ্ডিত হয় নি।

বাংলা ব্রেইল যে সামান্য পরিবর্ত্তিত আকারে বর্ত্তমানে প্রচলিত আছে,—লালবিহারী শাহ ১৮৯৪ সালের পরবর্ত্তী কোন সময়ে সেই পরিবর্ত্তন সাধন করেন ব'লে শোনা যায়। এ সম্বন্ধে "কলিকাতা অন্ধ-বিদ্যালয়ে"র ১৯৩৯ সালের কার্য-বিবরণীর ৪র্থ পৃষ্ঠা দ্রষ্টব্য। সুতরাং লালবিহারীবাবুর প্রণালী উদ্ভাবনের অন্ততঃ দু-তিন বৎসর পূর্ব্বেই রামানন্দবাবুর বাংলা ব্রেইল উদ্ভাবিত হয়। তুলনা ক'রলেই দেখা যায় যে, রামানন্দবাবুর ব্রেইলের সঙ্গে লালবিহারীবাবুর ব্রেইলের পার্থক্য, অল্প কয়েকটি অক্ষরের অদলবদল ছাড়া আর কিছুই নয়; এবং মূল আদর্শ সম্পূর্ণ এক। অতএব এ কথা নিঃসন্দেহে ও নিশ্চিতরূপে প্রমাণিত হয় যে, রামানন্দবাবুই বাংলা ব্রেইলের উদ্ভাবক।

রামানন্দবাবুর ব্রেইল যে কেন কাজে লাগান হয় নি তার কারণ অতি সহজেই বুঝতে পারা যায়। কিন্তু তাঁর এই মহান উদ্ভাবন কেন যে জনসাধারণের —বিশেষ করে অন্ধ-শিক্ষাব্রতীদের নিকট অজ্ঞাত ছিল, তার কারণ দুর্ব্বোধ্য। পূর্ব্বেই বলা হয়েছে যে, ১৯৪০ সালের পূর্ব্বে রামানন্দবাবুর এই পদ্ধতি সম্বন্ধে কিছুই প্রকাশিত হয় নি।

১৯৩৮ সালে এই প্রবন্ধের লেখক যখন তাঁর পি-এইচ্.ডি. পরীক্ষার জন্য প্রস্তুত হ'চ্ছিলেন, তখন রামানন্দবাবুর উদ্ভাবিত বাংলা ব্রেইল যে "দাসী" পত্রিকায় প্রকাশিত হ'য়েছিল, তার একটি সংখ্যা তাঁর (লেখকের) হস্তগত হয়। লেখক তাঁর অনুসন্ধানের ফল অন্যান্য অন্ধ-শিক্ষাব্রতীদের জানালে, তাঁরা সকলেই ভারতের অন্ধ-শিক্ষায় রামানন্দবাবুর দানের কথা সম্পূর্ণ ভাবে স্বীকার করেন।

বড়ই আনন্দের বিষয় এই যে, রামানন্দবাবুর জীবিত কালেই তাঁর এই বহুকাল-বিস্মৃত ও উপেক্ষিত মহৎ কার্য্যের জন্য একটি সকৃতজ্ঞ ও সশ্রদ্ধ অভিনন্দন জানাবার সুযোগ হ'য়েছিল। ১৯৪৩ সালের ৫ই সেপ্টেম্বর তারিখে নিখিল-ভারত অন্ধ-আলোক-নিকেতনের কর্ত্তৃপক্ষ ও ছাত্রছাত্রীগণ কর্ত্তৃক তাঁর রোগ-শয্যায় এই অভিনন্দন দেওয়া হয়।

শ্রীযুক্ত রামানন্দ চট্টোপাধ্যায় উদ্ভাবিত বাঙলা ব্রেইল বর্ণমালা

এক একটি শূন্যকে O এক একটি উচ্চ বিন্দু-চিহ্নের স্থানীয় মনে করিতে হইবে।

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STUDENTS AND STAFF OF THE ALL-INDIA LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND, PRESENTING AN ADDRESS TO MR. RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE, THE ORIGINATOR OF BENGALI BRAILLE, AT HIS SICK-BED IN 1943

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MR. RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE'S WORK FOR THE BLIND IN INDIA *

(Summary of a speech delivered at a condolence meeting, held at the Indian Association Hall, Calcutta, on the 22nd November, 1943, under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. P. Mookerjee.)

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I have taken my stand to address you this evening in obedience to the wish of our President, although I came here just to listen and pay my tribute of homage in silence to the late Mr. Ramananda Chatterjee.

The speakers preceding me have discussed Mr. Chatterjee's life from different aspects—as a journalist, as a politician, as a teacher, and as a strong and fearless man. I shall tell you a few words about Mr. Chatterjee as a social reformer.

From the very beginning of his career, Mr. Chatterjee turned his attention to the manifold miseries of our society. Towards the end of the last century, Mr. Chatterjee was one of the founders of *Dasashram* which was established in Calcutta in order to take care of the blind, the deaf, the homeless, and other under-privileged persons. He was also the Editor of *Dasi*, the organ of *Dasashram*. In this journal he wrote several articles dealing with the needs and problems of persons with different types of physical and social handicaps. In an article in the *Sraban* issue, B.S. 1299, corresponding to July,

* Published in the *Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta, 23rd November, 1941.

1892, he stressed the need of the education of the blind, and I shall conclude my speech by making a few remarks on this article.

It is indeed very creditable of Mr. Chatterjee to think of the blind at a time when there was no school for them in this province and very few people believed that the blind could be educated. He put forward a strong plea for the need of their education in that article and incorporated a complete chart of the Bengali Braille Code which he himself devised. The present Bengali Braille system, which is used by the blind, is nothing but a slight modification of the system which he evolved in 1892. This certainly speaks for the versatile genius of Mr. Chatterjee, as he could formulate such a well thought-out system without possessing the technical knowledge of the subject. Unfortunately, this contribution of his was not known to the public until very recently, and I feel proud to say that I had the unique privilege of securing this information in 1938 when I was carrying on some research-work in the field of blind education.

As a man, Mr. Chatterjee was supremely courteous to me and always accorded me a warm welcome whenever I paid him a visit. He was much interested in the problems of the blind and gave me his blessings for the very little which I had been doing for them.

On behalf of the blind in Bengal, I gratefully acknowledge his services for them and pray for the peace of his departed soul.

THE INVALID—A SOCIAL DEBT OR CREDIT

(A debate * broadcast from the Calcutta Studio of the All-India Radio on the 30th March, 1944.)

In opposing the view that the invalid are a social debt, I would, at the very outset, like to make two points very clear: First, by the term "invalids," which has not been a very happy selection in this context, I mean those persons who are physically handicapped in any one of the six or seven accepted descriptions, *viz.*, the blind, the deaf-mute, the crippled, and so on. Secondly, the invalids, in this sense of the term, constitute a definite asset to society provided suitable educational and environmental facilities are placed within their reach. After all, in the absence of these facilities, even the so-called normal persons are also a permanent drag on the smooth and continuous progress of social evolution.

Let me begin with a few lines from Longfellow, one of our immortal poets and thinkers:

"All are architects of Fate,
Working in these walls of Time;
Some with massive deeds and great,
Some with ornaments of rhyme.

"Nothing useless is, or low;
Each thing in its place is best;
And what seems but idle show
Strengthens and supports the rest."

* Published with the kind permission of the All-India Radio, Calcutta.

From this line of thought, the conception of social debt or liability is completely out of place and, perhaps, atrociously outrageous in any scheme of life. However, this interpretation of social debt may be considered as too philosophical and idealistic by many who judge human values by pragmatic standards. Let me, therefore, introduce the concept of social liability as formulated by Prof. John Dewy, one of the greatest American pragmatists. In connection with his expansion of the idea of social efficiency, Prof. Dewy states:

"If an individual is not able to earn his own living and that of the children dependent upon him, he is a drag or parasite upon the activities of others."

Are the trained and educated physically handicapped persons a social debt from the standpoint of this pragmatic test? Before attempting an answer to this question, it is necessary to meet the arguments set forth in the opposite thesis.

First, it has been held that, so long as the present social system continues, the physically handicapped must always remain a social debt as society does not have enough with which it can attend to both its normal and handicapped members. This virtually amounts to the statement that a father having two children—one sighted and the other blind, is justified in spending all his income on the seeing child and in starving the sightless one on the ground that his financial resources are limited. What difference would it make if both the children were sighted? The fact that an average physically handicapped person of any description can become a self-supporting and contributing individual through proper training and education, has, it seems, been en-

tirely missed or is not believed in by the learned speaker. The physically handicapped have the same birthright to education as the normal, and the introduction of the idea of charity in this regard, applicable to the former, is nothing but the result of illogical and undeveloped thinking. Besides, even the present-day capitalistic societies of Great Britain and America have shown by voting huge sums of money through a number of legislations that the lack of funds can and should never be made an excuse for denying the physically handicapped the rights and privileges enjoyed by their more fortunate brothers and sisters. The real fact is that it is the social attitude, and not money, which is the determining factor in this matter.

Secondly, even if sufficient funds are available, doubt has been raised as to whether society is justified in spending care and money on the physically handicapped who, according to the learned speaker, will always remain as " incomplete human beings." According to Aristotle, the only one quality which distinguishes a human being from all other forms of creation, is rationality. I thought that this psychological analysis of human nature was accepted unanimously as the last word regarding the essential characteristic of a human being. But the learned speaker seems to maintain that a person who is unable to perform all the duties of a normal man is an incomplete human being. If this new criterion of humanity is accepted, a host of persons, even from amongst the so-called normal, will have to be registered as incomplete human beings. The terms " duty " and " normal " are highly and precariously relative and are liable to different interpretations.

in different contextual references. What one normal man is able to perform, another may not; what men are able to perform, women may not, and *vice versa*. Will they all be described as incomplete human beings from the standpoint of this new criterion of humanity?

It must be admitted that the physically handicapped cannot be expected to participate in certain activities, but it must also be admitted in the same breath that there are several other activities in which the physically handicapped are as good as, if not better than, the normal persons. Nobody but blind Milton could write *Paradise Lost;* nobody but deaf Beethoven could compose so many symphonic masterpieces; and, to come to our present day, nobody but Roosevelt who is practically crippled, could become the President of the United States for three terms in succession.*

Of course, the need of training a physically handicapped individual, if he happens to be a genius, has been acknowledged by the learned speaker. But, unfortunately, genius, like love, cannot be determined by the first-sight principle. Genius, as it has been aptly stated, is 99% respiration and only 1% inspiration, and it is absolutely necessary both for the normal and the handicapped to have all possible scope for the exercise of this respirational aspect of genius. Otherwise, Gray's " Full many a gem " complaint will always stand out as a mighty accusation against human civilisation.

* Since the manuscripts were sent to the press, he has been elected for the fourth term also.

One important question crops up in this connection: Is it necessary for society to be always a genius-hunter? Should not its success be judged by that of an average person—nomal or handicapped, and not merely by the number of Nobel Prize winners? Measured by the pragmatic standard, referred to previously, an average physically handicapped person has proved himself to be immensely successful in many types of activity such as teaching, law, journalism, business administration, executive function. music, handicrafts, and so on. The present war has demonstrated the social utility of the physically handicapped still further. Owing to labour shortage, man salvage clinics have been established in different parts of the United States and these clinics have been instrumental in placing lakhs of physically handicapped persons, so long regarded as socially useless, in various types of work with conspicuous success.

The conclusion is, therefore, irresistible that the physically handicapped persons cannot be a social debt; on the contrary, they can and should be turned into social assets through an integrated plan of education and training.

PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO WORK FOR THE WAR-BLINDED *

(A LETTER)

It is very likely that a large number of persons in this country have become blind or will become so

* Published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 13th April, 1944, and the *Statesman*, Calcutta, 14th April, 1944.

in the near future as a result of war operations on the Eastern border of India. The workers for the blind will soon be confronted with a very serious problem as to how to help these victims of victory in the best possible way.

Of course, suitable provisions for their specialised training and education will have to be made. But this is, by no means, the immediate problem. What follows in the wake of blindness is not so much a yearning to see the faces of the loved ones or to enjoy the beauties of nature, which were once a never-failing source of solace and inspiration, but a sense of devastating helplessness, a fear of the yawning gulf of abysmal darkness surrounding the victim until the very last gasp of life, and a feeling of utter hopelessness about his ever being able again to earn his own living and of those dependent on him. This psychological adjustment to the permanently blacked out world is the immediate problem to which attention should be focussed, before the questions of training and education are taken in hand; and the sooner this adjustment is made, the less will be the suffering of the newly-blinded, and the more assuring will be the prospect of a successful course of training.

The first thing to do, therefore, is to create a deep-rooted confidence in the mind of the victim that he, in spite of his catastrophe, still remains a capable and lovable human being—an asset to society. The social workers who are entrusted with the care of these persons, should be thoroughly familiar with all the special problems of blind psychology. The accounts of those who have achieved a conquest over blindness, should be read or narrated to these victims, and the best thing would be to

give them opportunities to meet successful blind persons and talk to them freely and confidentially. A seeing person cannot gain the confidence of a sightless individual in the same way and to the same extent as a blind person can.

I appeal to the authorities of hospitals where these newly-blinded persons are confined for preliminary treatment, and to those in charge of diversional therapy to include this psychological aspect of the question into their programmes of relief and rehabilitation intended for these persons.

CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY COURSE FOR TEACHERS AND WORKERS OF THE BLIND *

(A LETTER)

From several enquiries made of me regarding the availability of suitable teachers and workers for the blind in India, it appears that the general public are not yet aware of the excellent arrangement existing at the Teachers' Training Department of the Calcutta University, since 1940, for the purpose of providing adequate training to those willing to undertake the work for the blind. This is the first time in the educational history of India that a course of this nature has been adopted as an item of the regular University curriculum and, so far, the Calcutta Uni-

* Published in the *Statesman*, Calcutta, 15th May, 1944.



Demonstration of Braille Reading and Writing by the Students of the "Education of the Visuality Handicapped" Class at the Calcutta University, held under the Chairmanship of Dr. SYAMAPRASAD MOOKERJEE, to whom this book has been dedicated

versity is the only University in this country having this important provision.

The course is a part of the Bachelor of Training programme and it comprises the History of the Education of the Blind, Special Psychological Problems of Blindness, and Practical Aspects in the Education of the Blind, including the reading and writing of Braille. During the last four years of this course, about 100 M.A., B.T.'s and B.A., B.T.'s—both men and women—have received this specialised training, and they are, thus, perfectly qualified to teach both the seeing and sightless boys and girls. A few of them have already been employed in responsible positions in the sphere of blind work.

The course has been modelled on the practice followed at Teachers College, Columbia University, although the course at Columbia University is much more comprehensive than that existing at the Calcutta University.
